WOMEN'S EDUCATION IN EASTERN INDIA

The First Phase

JOGESH CHANDRA BAGAL

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(Mainly Based on Contemporary Records)

BY

JOGESH CHANDRA BAGAL

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To

SRI SAJANI KANTA DAS

PREFACE

Eastern India, or to be more precise the Bengal Presidency, passed through a good deal of turmoil during the eighteenth century. In the early days of the nineteenth century peace was sufficiently established in this part of India, so that the leading and thoughtful persons, both Indian and European, could turn their attention towards the solution of the cultural and educational problems of the country. Education of our girls constituted a part of their programme. I have narrated the story of their efforts in this direction, leading upto the foundation of Mr. Bethune's school in 1849 and its reorganization by the Government in 1856.

Thanks to Sj. Sajani Kanta Das, the book was first published in August 1944 in a smaller form by the Ranjan Publishing House, Calcutta. It had rather a longing title, "Beginnings of Modern Education in Bengal: Women's Education". My original idea was to bring out two more brochures on "Primary Education" and on "Higher Education" on this side of the country. But that idea has not yet been realised. Two Bengali books of mine on the above subjects have, however, been included in the Visvavidya-Samgraha series of the Visva-Bharati. The present volume has been thoroughly revised and recast and considerably enlarged. The title of the book has been changed to suit its present form.

The University of Calcutta included the brochure in their curriculum of Higher Studies for the B. T. Examination, and I have reasons to believe that it proved useful to the students of Education. The book has long been exhausted. It is due to the zeal of Dr. Mahadeb Saha, a student of Indology, that the book has seen the light of day in its present garb. I

am specially thankful to Sj. Chittaranjan Banerjea of the National Library of India. It was very good of him to introduce me to Sj. Sripati Bhattacharjee of the World Press, who has kindly arranged for its early publication. Two notes—one from Dr. Mahadeb Saha and another from Sj. Debendra Nath Mitra—have been inserted in the Appendix.

I have spared no pains to utilise the contemporary records, both in scripts and print in the preparation of this book. I shall be thankful to my readers if they please read "lack of" before "proper means" on page 1, line 23.

Dr. Jadunath Sarkar, the doyen among Indian historians, has written a Foreword for the book, for which no expression of thanks is too adequate.

Calcutta,
15th July, 1956 Jogesh Chandra Bagal

FOREWORD

The greatest benefit that India has derived from the influence of English society and European thought, is a social revolution which has transformed our religion, literature, social rules and domestic life. And in Bengal the most potent agent of this change has been the education, and through education the emancipation of our women. The confinement of women behind the *purda,* and its inevitable corollary child marriage, have now almost disappeared from Bengali society,—not by the action of the British Indian Government (which always dreaded to lay its reforming hand on Indian society), but by the zeal of noble-hearted British men and women and the dynamic force of modern rationalistic thought which began to percolate from Europe into India with the dawning of the nineteenth century and which our intelligentsia eagerly embraced.

By the abolition of the *purda* system, Bengal's man-power has been doubled and this province has been enabled to rival Madras and Maharashtra, where the women have always been free to move about and work in public.

It is merely patriotic sophistry to boast that we had learned Hindu women in the dim Vedic age or cite the names of a few modern rare birdslike Hati Vidyalankar and Rani Bhawani. No honest man can deny the fact that upto the accession of Queen Victoria (1837), the universal belief among the Bengali Hindus was that a woman who took to reading and writing was an accursed sinner, doomed to widowhood and the life of a harlot. Bankim Chandra—which of us can claim to be a greater lover of our people than he?—gives a true picture of our old high class mentality when he makes Devi

Chaudhurani, on her return to her father-in-law's family, conceal every trace of her having learned to read and write during her ten years of obscure exile.

On such a dark and heart-breaking social background, the Christian missionaries (the Baptist Mission first in 1819 and the Anglican C. M. S. in 1824) began the experiment of the *public* education of Bengali girls in *general* classes, without any aid from the State funds. A few generous Hindu helpers far ahead of their times, boldly came forward to support them. Here the names of Rajah Baidyanath Roy of Jorasanko (donated Rs. 20,000 for a school-house in 1825) and Raja Radhakant Dev of Sova Bazar should not be forgotten. The first whole-time teacher from England was Miss Mary Ann Cooke, who joined her work in Calcutta (C. M. S. colony in the Mirzapur ward) in 1821, married the Rev. Isaac Wilson of the C. M. S. in 1824 and retired from India in 1845.

But as the aim of the missionaries was naturally to spread the light of the Gospel in Indian homes through their Hindu girl-students and Bible teaching was compulsory, the inevitable reaction began in educated Hindu Society. Their grumbling first became vocal in 1831 and it culminated in the foundation of our first secular public school for Indian girls, in 1849, which was the seed of the famous Bethune College.

The story of these pioneer attempts and the fortunes of each benevolent society for promoting female education in Bengal during those eventful thirty years is told with full documentation and exact details in the present book. It is a piece of sound historical work and a source indispensable to every student of our social and cultural development. The information has been patiently dug out of many a forgotten,

many a dark mine, and presented here with admirable literary skill.

As I rise after reading this book, I feel that if we Bengalis of today are blessed with fully cultured partners in life, if we see our sisters worthily holding high positions in the administration and public life, in literary and social work, in the learned professions and business,—almost on a par with their brothers, then we must thank those Christian missionaries and their supporting lay sisters who fought our battle for thirty years from 1819 amidst appalling difficulties and lack of finance, till at last light conquered darkness, and the exotic of female education in public took root in Bengal.

No proper study of the great social revolution which we call the *Renaissance of India* is possible without the works of Brojendra Nath Banerjee (alas, lost to us in his early sixties) and Jogesh Chandra Bagal (still working and year by year adding to the rich garner of our knowledge). Each of them has devoted a life of patient labour to this subject and rigidly followed the correct scientific principles of history-writing by going to the original sources, and critically examining and methodically piecing together all the evidence. They have shunned the path to cheap popularity, through frothy rhetoric and popular misbeliefs. And, therefore, their work will endure.

Jadunath Sarkar

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Raja Radhakant Deb

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Education of women is not a new thing in India. In ancient times they used to compose hymns, some of which have found a place in the Vedas. They took part in religious and philosophical discussions with men. Amongst the Buddhist preachers women were not a few. There were organisations of nuns and life-long devotees of the Lord Buddha.

The culture that was so widely prevalent amongst our womenfolk, found a severe set-back with the advent of the Moslems in India. The *purdah* system had to be widely introduced and rigidly followed. Free movements of women came to be restricted. Education of women was out of the question. Even in the early period of the British regime, people considered the education of women almost as a sin. They believed that a literate woman would lose her husband sooner than an illiterate one.

But even in those dark days, Indian women maintained their love of culture. The stories of the *Ramayana,* the *Mahabharata,* the *Puranas,* as well as the *Mangal Kavyas* of the middle ages supplied the vacuum created by the proper means of education. Their love of art found expression in *Alpana,* painting, sewing and many other useful crafts.

It is also not a fact that none of our women were literate in this period. We find some women both amongst Hindus and Moslems making their mark as authors and poets. Women were also versed in statecraft. Rani Bhawani of hallowed memory managed her big Zemindary covering one third of the Bengal Presidency even before the commencement of

the British rule. Herself well-versed in Indian lore, she maintained a large number of *tols* or *Chatuspathis,* throughout her Zemindary and patronised the study of Sanskrit in all its aspects.

Accounts of some women scholars of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century have come down to us. Hati Vidyalankar, a Bengali resident at Benares, Shyammohini Devi of Katalipara, district Faridpur, and Dravamayi of Khamakul Krishnagar, district Hugli, were eminent women Pandits or Sanskrit Scholars. They each not only mastered the Sanskrit studies, but came out to debate important and knotty points of the Hindu Sastras with the prominent men-scholars of the time. They also accepted presents from the people in recognition of their scholarship like men-scholars. Hati Vidyalankar ran a *Tol* at Benares, where she taught students Sanskrit Vyakarana, Kavya and Nabyanyaya.[1]

Though the superstitions of common men persisted against women's education, those of the upper classes some times did not pay heed to them. And we have it on record that they often induced their womenfolk to read and write, and pursue their studies even later. Radhakant Deb wrote as early

[1] "I am informed that at present there is a female philosopher at Benares, whose name is Hutee Vidyalunkara. She was born in Bengal, her father was a Koolinu bramhun; her husband also was a koolinu. It is not the practice of the koolinu bramhuns, when they marry the daughters of koolinus, to take these wives to their own houses, but they stay with their parents. Thus it was with Hutee. Her father being a learned man instructed his daughter in the knowledge of several shastrus; he particularly taught her the sungskritu grammar, and the kavyu shastrus. However ridiculous the notion may be, that if a woman pursue learning she will become a widow, the husband of Hutee left her a widow. Her father also died; and in consequence she fell into great distress. In these circumstances, like many others who are tired of the world, she went to reside at Benares. Here she pursued learning afresh, and got some little knowledge of the smritee and other shastrus. At length she began to teach others, and obtained a number of pupils, who came to her from different parts; so that she is now universally known in those parts by the name of Hutee Vidyalunkara, viz. learning is her ornament."—W. Ward's *Account of the Writings, Religion, and Manners of the Hindoos,* Vol. I, 1811, pp. 195-6.

as in 1819: "We get our girls taught in Bengalee before they are married."[2] Women of the Sobhabazar Debs, those of the Jorasanko Raj, of the Tagores of Pathuriaghata and Jorasanko, Calcutta, and those of the Burdwan Raj family at Burdwan, were mostly literate. Some belonging to the middle-class families could also read and write. They however, never went to a public school, but were taught at home. Pearychand Mitra, a great public man and literary figure of the nineteenth century, thus wrote in the preface to his *Adhvatmika*:

> I was born in the year 1814 (12th July) corresponding with the Bengali era 1221 (8 Shravan). While a pupil of *Pathsala* at home, I found my grandmother, mother and aunts reading Bengali books. They could write in Bengali and keep accounts. There were no female schools then.

This fact of the domestic education of women did not fail to draw the attention of the notable Europeans. Sir Edward Hyde East, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court (later, High Court) of Calcutta and a friend of Indian education, referred to the system of domestic education of women in some of the respectable families of Calcutta and elsewhere in his presidential address at the second annual meeting of the Calcutta School Society on June 2, 1822. The *Government Gazette* (June 7, 1822) reported this portion of Sir Edward's speech as follows:

> The Hon'ble the Chief Justice also observed in continuation of the subject, that though for various reasons the disposition of the respectable natives, to see their females raised by a plain education to the level they are entitled to hold, had not been evinced in a public manner, yet he had the gratification to know that some natives were to be found of the highest respectability who were giving their attention to the subject and in some instances privately endeavouring in their domestic

[2] See Appendix.

circles to give effect to their designs for the instruction of their females.

But one should not remain satisfied with this narrow system of education alone. The thoughtful section of our countrymen were striving hard to raise the common womenfolk from their low state in society. Raja Rammohun Ray, the great Indian reformer, started a movement against the *Suttee*, or immolation of women on dead husband's funeral pyre, even before the twenties of the last century. To popularise this movement he used to issue pamphlets in Bengali. In these much stress was laid *inter alia* on the rights and claims of women. He also advocated the cause of women's education so that they might be conscious of their own position in society and discharge their duties to themselves as well as to the people at large. Pandit Gourmohan Vidyalankar's *Stri Sikshavidhayaka*, of which more is to be said later on, did much for popularising the cause of women's education. Besides mentioning the instances of ancient and modern educated women in India, Pandit Gourmohan emphasised the need of women's education in public schools for the general improvement of the females.

But as it then stood, it was the only well-to-do among the people who could provide for the domestic education of their women. But what about the education of Indian women in general, and how to combat the superstitious notions against female education? Here stepped in other agencies to fill up this deficiency. The credit of starting free public schools for the education of Indian women was solely due to the Societies and Associations formed in Calcutta by the European women in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Radhakant Deb, Gourmohan Vidyalankar and Baidya Nath Roy, to name

only a few among the generous Hindus, helped these efforts materially in various ways; especially Radhakant Deb, who has been rightly called the pioneer of women's education among his countrymen, and the Hindus of Calcutta in particular. That the girls of the upper classes gradually resorted to public schools was also no less due to his enlightened and ceaseless endeavours.

CHAPTER II

THE FEMALE JUVENILE SOCIETY

The Female Juvenile Society was the first to appear in the field. It was founded as early as 1819 with the set purpose of opening free schools in Calcutta and its suburbs for the education of our girls, as its somewhat longish name, "The Female Juvenile Society for the Establishment and Support of Bengalee Female Schools" indicates. Charles Lushington, a responsible officer of the Government of India, wrote in 1824 about the Society's origin as follows:

The old adage that good may come out of evil, has been verified in the establishment of this Institution; for it took it's rise from one of the most preposterous misrepresentations that ever proceeded from credulity of ignorance. Allusion is here made to an Address written, apparently, by some Members of the Calcutta Baptist Missionary Society in April 1819, to the young ladies of Mrs. Lawson and Pearce's Seminary proposing the formation of a School for the education of Hindoo girls. The object was certainly unexceptionable and praiseworthy; but how was it urged?—principally by the assertion that "in the Province of Bengal alone at least 10.000 widows are annually sacrificed,. .which ought to call forth our tenderest pity, as well as our most vigorous exertions."

It is not surprising that this tremendous sacrifice of human life should have alarmed the young ladies, and excited their sympathy in the dreadful picture of misery exhibited to their imaginations. Especially, too, as they could not, at the time, have the means of knowing the real facts of the case, as they have since come before the public in an authentic form. How different these are from the above statement, will appear from the papers, printed by order of the House of Commons, containing the official reports of the Supreme Government of India, which state the total number of Suttees that took place in the province of Bengal in 1819, the year in which the Address was penned, to have amounted to *five hundred, and*

one, being Nine Thousand Four Hundred and Ninety Nine fewer than the annual estimate of ten thousand, propounded by the writers of that appalling document![1]

Within a short time after the Address was received, the ladies of Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Pearce's Seminary succeeded in forming the Female Juvenile Society in co-operation with some other ladies, as well as the missionaries of the Baptist Mission. The Rev. W. H. Pearce of the Baptist Mission, also European Secretary to the Calcutta School Society, became its president. The rules of the Society were simple, only five in number:

1st.—That a Society be formed for the promotion of female education in Bengal; and that it be denominated "The Calcutta Female Juvenile Society for the establishment and support of Bengalee Female Schools."

2nd.—That all persons subscribing any sum monthly or annually be considered Members of the Society.

3rd.—That donations to any amount be thankfully received, and carried to account in the names of the contributors.

4rth.—That the business of the Society be conducted by a President, and a Committee of fourteen Ladies, members of the Society, including the Treasurer, two Secretaries, and the Collector.

5th.—That a general meeting of subscribers and friends be held annually, at which a Report shall be read of the progress of the School or Schools supported by the Society. At the same time the Committee and officers for the following year shall be chosen, and the general business of the Society transacted.[2]

The earliest mention of the Female Juvenile Society and its first institution at Gouri Bere, Calcutta, is found in a letter of its president, Mr. Pearce, to G. Forbes, Esq., a member of the Calcutta School Society, dated August 29, 1819. He wrote:

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[1] *History, Design, and Present State of the Religious, Benevolent and Charitable Institutions founded by the British in Calcutta and its Vicinity.* 1824, pp. 185-7. Afterwards the book will be referred to as *Lushington.*

[2] *Lushington*, pp. 189-90.

....there are not more than two hundred Bengalee schools, averaging twenty-one pupils each, or four thousand and two hundred children under instruction from Chitpore Bridge to Birjootulao....Females too in Calcutta are in an inferior proportion,....from this number Hindoo girls are excluded, a single school for this interesting but neglected class of our fellow subjects having never, I believe, till within these last three months, existed in Calcutta.

These extracts occur in the *Second Report of* the *Calcutta School-Book Society's Proceedings, second year, 1818-19.* The compiler of these *Proceedings,* perhaps to clear this matter further, added the following lines in a foot-note to the above statement:

Many attempts to collect a female school had been previously made, but failed on account of the prejudices of the parents. The one here referred to was instituted at the expense of a small 'society for the promotion of Female Bengalee schools' formed a few months ago in a Ladies' Seminary in Calcutta.

The Female Juvenile Society published its second report on December 14, 1821. *The Calcutta Journal* in its issue of March 11, 1822, gave a summary of this report in which we find the extent of the Society's exertions in the matter of female education. I give the relevant portions here:

The Society has been in operation upwards of two years and a half; when first established, the obstacles to its usefulness seemed insurmountable, only one Bengalee girl being found after a diligent search of several months, qualified to instruct her countrywomen, and she from the illness of her husband was obliged a few months after to relinquish the task; the Committee also made a trial of introducing some girls into the boys' school, but with very little success; so that for nearly the first twelve months after the establishment of the society only eight pupils were receiving instruction at its expense. In April, 1820, a well-qualified mistress was obtained, and thirteen scholars collected and by the persevering exertions and the co-operation of friends it was gradually brought to its present state....

The number of pupils in the school first established now amounts to 32, some of which are adults....

'Of the Thirty scholars no less than eleven are called after one goddess, the Wife of Shivu and nine more after another, the Wife of Vishnoo...The ages of the scholars vary, one being as old as thirty and several only five. There are a due proportion of all castes: two *Brahmuns,* four *Kayusthas* and seven *Voishnubas;* four *Bagdees* and four *Chundals,* thus comprising both the highest and the lowest; but it is added, in this institution happily the injurious distinction of caste is little felt.'

Great hopes are entertained of the good that may be effected by auxiliary schools to be kept by those who have been in the original seminary, and several of these have already been established;...The number of pupils now receiving instruction at the Society's expense, has increased since last Anniversary from 21 to 79; besides which there are several under Schoolmasters, who pay for their own instruction. Seventy-six of the Society's scholars are under the care of Female Teachers, and three only, two in Shambazar and one in Juanbazar, are under Schoolmasters. Each of the schools is placed under particular care of a member of the Committee, and is visited by her, if possible, once or twice, every week; and as a mark of gratitude as well as matter of convenience, the schools (with the exception of the first formed, called the Juvenile school) are named after the place in which the ladies reside, who as appears by recent accounts, have contributed to their support. The second is called the 'Liverpool School', the third that of Salem, and another near Chitpore established since the date of the Report, 'Birmingham School.'

I have ascertained from other sources that during this period, the girls of the first and second institutions made considerable progress in their studies. It has been stated already that, amongst the Hindus, Radhakant Deb took particular interest in the cause of women's education. He, as Native Secretary to the Calcutta School Society, invited the girls of the schools of the Female Juvenile Society to appear at the periodical examinations of the scholars of his

own Society, held at his house in Sobhabazar in 1821 and 1822. I have found mention of at least three such occasions of the girls' participation in the manuscript *Proceedings* of the Calcutta School Society for 1818-1831. In the report of the second annual examination of the Society's Schools held on January 25, 1821, occurs the following:

> The meeting was closed in the evening, by the examination of a number of Bengalee girls belonging to the school instituted by the Juvenile Society and their progress added much to the interest of the meeting.

Respectable Indians and Europeans used to attend these functions. They were now much impressed with the progress the girls had made in their studies. On 3rd September following, at the fourth quarterly examination of the School Society's boys, fourteen girls from the Juvenile school were present. At the third annual examination of the Society's boys held at Sobhabazar on 4th January 1822, the number of girl examinees rose to nearly forty. This was due to the institution of more girls' schools by the Female Juvenile Society by this time. That the girls had made considerable progress in their studies was clearly noted in the *Proceedings* thus:

> The examination commenced first with a number of Bengalee girls educated at two female schools instituted by the Juvenile Society, and the progress of the whole community nearly 40 was such as to give evident satisfaction to the company assembled.

Rammohun Ray's actions in connection with the *Suttee* and his advocacy of women's rights to property and the need for women's education as I have stated before, compelled attention to the actual condition of Indian womanhood and thus gave an impetus to this beginning of female education. The publication about this time of Pandit Gourmohan Vidyalan-

kar's *Stri Sikshavidhayaka*, a treatise emphasizing the importance of female education, was felt to be opportune. *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* contains "evidence in favour of the education of Hindoo Females, from the examples of illustrious women, both ancient and modern." In the preparation of this book Radhakant Deb supplied Gourmohan with materials from Sanskrit texts.

It was again Raja Radhakant who offered the Female Juvenile Society the manuscript of this book. The Female Juvenile Society took up the work of its publication and distribution in March, 1822. The first edition was very small; containing only fourteen pages. It was enlarged in subsequent editions. The endeavours of the Juvenile Society were duly noticed in this important book. The first edition of the book having been exhausted soon, the Calcutta School-Book Society published the second edition in August following, and the subsequent editions later on. In its third edition the book was enlarged to nearly double its size. The author improved it by simplifying the language and by suiting it to the capacity of the young girls. Certain chapters of *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* formed a part of the curriculum followed in the female schools.

By the year 1823 the number of free female schools had multiplied. The Female Juvenile Society started as many as eight schools in Calcutta and its vicinity. And it should be particularly noted here that the girls who received their instruction in these schools came mostly of the lower strata of our society.

The Female Juvenile Society at this time got itself incorporated with the Bengal Christian School Society and became the latter's Female Department. It was no longer thought necessary to seek the patro-

nage of Radhakant Deb and, for the matter of that, of the Calcutta School Society, for holding periodical examinations. There must have been another reason for keeping the organisers aloof from the Calcutta School Society and this devout Hindu. Teaching of Christian literature in its easy and elementary form was introduced in these female schools at this time. The following account of the annual examination of girls from the *Government Gazette* (Supplement) for December 22, 1823, throws a considerable light on the history of the Female Juvenile Society and the mode of teaching pursued in its schools:

Bengal School Society.—On Friday last, the 19th instant, at Gowree Ber, near Calcutta, was held a Public Examination of the Native schools connected with *Female Department* of the *Bengal Christian School Society.* Upwards of 140 Hindoo or Mussulman Girls were present, and were examined in Bengalee by the Rev. Messrs. Carey, Wilson, and Jetter with other active friends of Native Female Education, in reading, writing and spelling. They were divided in classes, whose attainments were as follows:

1st Class—Could read the Alphabet.

2nd and 3rd Class—Read and spelt words out of Jetter's Spelling Book.

4th Class—Read dialogues between a Mother and Daughter, and spelt any words out of Pearson's Spelling Book.

5th Class—Read Mother and Daughter, and the Fables called *Neeti Katha* 1st and 2nd part, and spelt any words asked them out of Pearson's Spelling Book.

6th Class—Read any part of Pearson's Dialogues between a Mother and Daughter, Defence of Female Education, and Pearce's Geography; Spelt any word asked them in the Spelling Book; and could read with facility any Book put into their hands.

The progress which all had made in these studies, and some in *Needle work,* (which has been introduced since the last anniversary,) gave evident satisfaction to all present and was such as must inspire every friend of native education with

most flattering hopes of extensive benefits from this important and too long neglected department of philanthropic labour. It must have been particularly gratifying to Mrs. Coleman, who has for the last year had the more immediate superintendence of their education.

We understand that the girls present were from *eight schools* under the care of the society; that besides these, *two new schools* have very recently been established,.... We have been given to understand that it was under the auspices of the Institution as originally constituted, about 5 years ago, that the *first attempt* was made in Native Female Education in this neighbourhood, and that the success of this institution led to the various and useful exertions which are now making by individuals and societies both at home and this country in this promising field of labour...

Gouri Bere was then deemed situated at an inconvenient distance from the city. The editor of the *Government Gazette* asked the organisers of the Society to select a place 'more eligibly situated for their next examination' so that 'friends of the native education' might attend in larger number.

The activities of the Society extended throughout the city and its suburbs. A comprehensive picture of these activities cannot be drawn up, as the reports are not available now. We should rest satisfied with the summaries of the Society's reports and the accounts of its periodical examinations published in the newspapers of the time. These newspapers again have become very scarce. Still the few that could be got hold of, should be diligently searched; and anything relevant that is found, should be used properly. In those days newspapers published accounts of annual examinations as well as a short history of the school or society under whose auspices these were held. One such account has been given above. In the *Government Gazette* of January 26, 1826, occurs another account of the examination of the Society's schools in the northern division of

Calcutta. In this also it will be found that considerable improvement had been effected in the preparation of class books and mode of teaching. Teaching of Christian doctrines was, no doubt, a part of the curriculum. I give this account *in extenso:*

Native Female Schools:—On Monday last, the 16th January, were examined at the Benevolent Institution, in presence of many of the most active promoters of Native Education, the Female Schools supported by the Bengal Christian Society. The examination was conducted by the Rev. Messrs. Wilson and Yates, assisted by Messrs. Pearce and Piffard; and the following is a sketch of the progress which the children present, amounting to nearly a hundred, had made in Bengalee their native language.

The 6th or Lowest Class—Read a Picture Alphabet, with the compound consonants and vowels.

The 5th Class—Read a Picture Alphabet, and the Easy Lesson attached, read and spelt nearly any part of Pearson's Spelling Book; and repeated, in class, seven pages of Mother and Daughter.

The 4th Class—Read Picture Alphabet and Mother and Daughter, and repeated the first part of it; and spelt most of the whole of Pearson's Spelling Book.

The 3rd Class—Read Good Child and the attached lesson, Memoir of Krishno Prusad; and Mother and Daughter. They also spelt any word in Pearson's Spelling Book, and repeated the greater part of Watt's *Catechism.*

The 2nd Class—Read the Parables of our Lord, with commentary;—the lessons in Jetter's Spelling Book, and also spelt eight columns, and gave the definition attached;—and repeated Pearson's.

The 1st Class—Read, as directed, any part of the Gospel of John, and were prepared to read Henry and his Bearer or any other Easy Book. Shewed themselves in some degree acquainted with Pearce's Geography and readily pointed out places on the Map of the world. Spelt Jetter's Spelling Book, as far as the 17th page, and gave the definition attached and repeated Pearson's Catechism.

The pupils had with them some creditable specimens of their improvements in writing, Arithmetic, and sewing; the

latter, we understand from the ladies present, evidenced very respectable efficiency in this interesting and useful branch of Native Female Education.

We were informed that the pupils examined, which were as many as could be conveniently brought such a distance, were selected from the Northern Division, and that the schools in the Southern Division being too distant to allow the Children to attend in the city, will be examined at Kidderpore at a future period...

It is surprising to observe the progress that has been made in this department of labour in so short a period. Seven years ago, a single Native Female School was not to be found in Bengal, and they were in the grossest ignorance until the happy work was commenced by the formation of the Female Juvenile Society out of which the present Bengal Christian School Society sprang, and since then the Ladies' Society has been formed in this city, which in patronage and resources far outshines its predecessor. As both these Societies bear the most important aspect on the welfare of this country we trust they will both meet with that support which they so justly merit; and that institutions of this nature will continue to enlarge their labours and resources till it shall be as common to see Girls', as Boys' Schools in every village in India.

The *Government Gazette's* expectations were fulfilled to some extent in this part of the country within a few years from this time. Since its formation in 1824, the Ladies' Society, referred to above, was very active towards this end, and its exertions were many and various. The works of the Female Juvenile Society, though humble and much less ambitious in nature, continued uninterruptedly for some years. The *Government Gazette* of June 25, 1829, while summarising the eighth report of the Society, referred to its maintaining twenty schools at the time. I have not been able to gather any information of the Society's activities between the years 1829 and 1831. *The Calcutta Christian Observer,* in its issue of December, 1832, published a summary of the eleventh report of the Female Juvenile Society, this time re-

christened the 'Calcutta Baptist Female Society'. It is gratifying to note that the Society had established female schools at such far-off stations as Cutwa and Birbhum. The following extracts will show the extent of its exertions in their proper perspective:

Calcutta Baptist Female School Society.—This Society under its former designation of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, had the honour of leading the way in Native Female Education in Bengal; and it gives us pleasure to find, from its Eleventh Annual Report, lately published, that it is still prosecuting these interesting exertions with activity and success.

The report, after lamenting the loss sustained by the Committee in the death of its able and zealous secretary, (Mrs. Jonathan Carey,) and stating very forcibly the vast advantages and necessity of Female Education in this country, gives an account of the Seminaries under the patronage of the Society. These are as follows:

Seven schools in Calcutta or its neighbourhood, under the superintendence of Mrs. W. H. Pearce, Mrs. Yates, Mrs. Penny, and Mrs. Thomas, containing altogether 150 children: a Central School at Chitpore, superintended by Mrs. G. Pearce, containing 120 children: a second central school at Cutwa, under the care of Mrs. W. Carey, containing nearly 200 children: and 4 schools at Birbhum, containing 60 children, and superintended by Mrs. Williamson. The total number of children connected with the Institution is about 500.

The uniting in one Central School at each station, the pupils formerly taught in several small seminaries, has been found a great advantage; the regularity of attendance and the progress in learning of the children having been by this step greatly promoted...

Information regarding the further activities of the Society is lacking. But the service rendered by the Society to the cause of women's education in Calcutta and Bengal by setting up free schools for the girls of our poorer countrymen was invaluable. Within a few years of its formation, other ladies' societies also sprang up for the same purpose. But

the Female Juvenile Society was the pioneer in this line.

J. Statham, who was in India in the early twenties, came to be personally acquainted with the activities of the Female Juvenile Society. He vehemently protested against the claims of the Ladies' Society being the pioneer in the establishment of free schools for girls. Statham's observations are quoted below:

> It deserves the serious consideration of the highly respectable Committee of the Ladies' Society, whether it may not be necessary still to alter the resolution, which is in a manner a part of the charter of the Society; since the principles of morality require that untruth of any kind, though seemingly innocent, should be carefully avoided; and more specially since the present mis-statement unjustly ascribed to others the praise of having introduced into this country the system of native female education—a praise which justly belongs to the founders of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, now denominated the Calcutta Baptist Female Society.[3]

[3] I. Statham: *Indian Recollections*, 1832. P. 61.

CHAPTER III

THE LADIES' SOCIETY

Next in order comes the Ladies' Society. Its full name was "Ladies' Society for Native Female Education in Calcutta and its vicinity". The circumstances that led to the formation of this society should be told first. At the insistence of some members of the Calcutta School Society, the British and foreign School Society of London raised subscription in England, for the purpose of sending to Bengal a female teacher, to institute schools for Bengali girls. The lady selected was Miss Mary Ann Cooke (later, Mrs. Wilson) who arrived in Calcutta in November 1821. It should be stated that in the matter of her selection William Ward of the famous Serampore Baptist Mission might have a hand, and she accompanied him to India on the same boat. Miss Cooke was sent with the laudable object of helping the Calcutta School Society in the work of female education by opening girls' schools. But as the public schools for girls were not yet widely favoured by the people, the Society could not be unanimous in utilising the services of Miss Cooke. Radhakant Deb, Native Secretary to the School Society, however, suggested in a letter to the Rev. W. H. Pearce, the European Secretary, on 10th December, 1821 that Miss Cooke might render her services (if required) to the schools lately established by the Missionaries for the tuition of the poor girls of Native Christian Females.[1] The Church Missionary Society gladly accepted his suggestion and engaged her in their schools.

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[1] Quoted in the *MSS. Proceedings* of the Calcutta School Society (1818-1831). Also see the Appendix: Radhakant Deb's Letter (III) to J. E. D. Bethune.

Charles Lushington quoted from the reports of the Church Missionary Society in 1824 the story of how Miss Cooke started the first school in the respectable quarters of the Hindu community. The study of Bengali was the first thing to be engaged in, and she visited a pathsala of the School Society to pick up conversational Bengali. A European lady in the Indian quarters was a rare thing, and people naturally gathered round her. A girl of tender age was not allowed to learn to read in the school, and through an interpreter, Miss Cooke came to know of her eagerness to learn the three R's. On the following day Miss Cooke, with a female friend who spoke Bengali fluently, attended the place. About fifteen girls, accompanied in several cases by their mothers, assembled. Then a long conversation followed which afforded Miss Cooke some insight into the modes of thinking prevalent among them. Miss Cooke's first school was thus started.

From contemporary accounts we can make an estimate of Miss Cooke's efforts at opening free primary schools for girls under the patronage of the Church Missionary Society. She was able to start female schools in Thanthania, Mirzapore, Sobha Bazar, Krishna Bazar, Mallick Bazar and Kumartolly. By April 1822, the number of schools rose to eight and students a little over two hundred. The people of the localities helped Miss Cooke a great deal in opening and also in maintaining the schools. Within a year the girls' schools increased to fifteen and houses for eleven schools were built. Upwards of three hundred girls were under instruction. At first these schools directed their attention exclusively to reading and writing, but as soon as a class had been formed who could read lessons in the Bengali book of fables, instruction was given in needle-work. In

six schools where some proficiency had already been made, about eighty dozen of dusters were sewn, and some of the scholars became capable of finer work. They used to receive the usual remuneration for the work done. In a few of the schools knitting was also introduced. The schools were on the increase, but only one respectable widow had up till then qualified herself for the charge of one of them, and three young women were at the time preparing themselves to act as teachers.

We have an account of the examinations of the girl students of Miss Cooke's school in Lushington's book. On the 23rd June 1823 one hundred and ten children sat for the examination at the Church Missionary Society's house. Though it was a Hindu holiday, five only were absent on that account. "The first class read with ease a Bengali Tract on female education,[2] the work of a learned native though considered a rather difficult book from the frequent occurence of Sanscrit phrases; others read in books of Fables, Watt's Catechism translated into Bengali. Their proficiency in needle work was also respectable. This species of employment, which the girls at first considered as degrading, has, it is said, become an object of anxious solicitation with them. Of their eagerness on this head, and for literary instruction, the last report of the Church Missionary Society contains some remarkable instances. At the close of the examination, rewards were distributed from a stock supplied by the Marchioness of Hastings, on her departure from India."[3]

The zealous endeavours of Miss Cooke bore fruit, beyond expectation. For an individual it was

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2 *Stri Sikshavidhayaka*, by Pandit Gour Mohan Vidyalankar.
3 *Lushington*, p. 198.

now impossible to continue such hard work any more. Archdeacon Corrie, an ardent supporter of her cause, issued an appeal on behalf of the Church Missionary Society and got it published in the *Government Gazette* Supplement, for March 6, 1823. The main purpose of this appeal was to emphasise the need of establishing a central female school in the heart of the city. Corrie stated *inter alia*:

> The time has arrived when a Central School is urgently wanted. Hitherto Miss Cooke's initiatory labours have been carried on amongst detached schools, some of them separated from each other by considerable distances, in the superintendence of which she had been indefatigable, visiting as many as her time and strength would admit, every day. As her schools increased, the labour of efficient teaching became proportionately greater. It is now becoming important to provide for the more easy and difficult management of her enlarged numbers. With this view it is proposed to erect a school in some central spot, to be called the Central School for Native Female Education. At present Miss Cooke has to repeat often the same lessons to *a few* at once, *whereas in a school centrally situated, the first classes might assemble from all the schools after their morning lessons, and receive together the instruction now given in detached parties.* The saving of labour would thus be considerable, and the improvement of the children would also be much rapid. The advantages of such a school are indeed too obvious to need specification. (*Italics mine.*)

By the year 1824, these girls' schools increased to twenty-four and the number of scholars four hundred. The labour of superintendence and daily instruction in so many schools proved too much for Miss Cooke, now Mrs. Wilson being married to the Rev. Isaac Wilson of the Church Missionary Society. To cope with the situation, the Church Missionary Society thought it advisable to vest the management of these schools in the hands of a separate body of ladies. This body would not only look after their affairs but also make serious attempts to establish

the Central School as proposed by the Revd. Corrie in his above appeal. With this distinct purpose the Ladies' Society for Native Female Education was ushered into being in Calcutta at a meeting held on the 25th March, 1824. The aims and objects of the Society were couched in the following resolutions:

That the education of native females is an object highly desirable, and worthy the best exertions of all who wish well to the happiness and prosperity of India.

That the system, introduced into this country by Mrs. Wilson [4] and has been pursued by her under the patronage of the Church Missionary Society, with a degree of success, which could hardly have been anticipated by those who were aware of the novelty and apparent difficulty of the undertaking, and is capable of an extension and improvement, only limited by the want of sufficient funds, for it's prosecution on a scale commensurable to it's objects.

That it appears to this meeting, that there are at present 24 Schools under her superintendence, attended on an average by 400 pupils; that females of the most respectable caste and station in society, have both sent their daughters, and, in some instances, have themselves expressed anxiety to obtain instruction; and that the system of instruction pursued has met the expressed concurrence and approbation of some of the most distinguished among the Native gentry and religious instructors.

That in order to render Mrs. Wilson's labors yet more effectual, and to meet the feelings of the respectable natives of India, by rendering the establishment more exclusively female, it is expedient that the officers and government of the Schools now existing, or hereafter to be established in connection with them in Calcutta and it's vicinity, be placed under the superintendence and control of a certain number of ladies, as patronesses and visitors, who may be inclined to give a portion of their time, to this interesting and laudable object.

That Mrs. Wilson's house in Mirzapore, being on many grounds inconvenient and objectionable, the meeting approves of the intention expressed by the Committee of the Church Missionary Society, to erect a new School in a more appro-

4 This was objected to by J. Statham, as quoted on p. 18.

priate place, which as soon as completed shall be used as the central School, and place of meeting for the Lady patronesses, and ladies of the Committee.

That the time of meeting be once a month, and the presence of four ladies, including the Secretary, required to proceed to business.

That a general meeting of the friends of the Institution be held once a year, at such time and place as may be hereafter determined on, of which timely notice shall be given, when the proceedings of this Committee shall be laid before the Subscribers, and specimens produced of the proficiency of the female children educated under their direction.

That subscriptions for the furtherence of these objects be received by the Secretary, Mrs. Ellerton, as also by the Secretary and Treasurer of the Church Missionary Society, such subscriptions being distinguished as designed for 'the Native Schools in and near Calcutta.'

That in case of any circumstances arising which may make it necessary for the Committee to discontinue their labors, the management of the Institution shall revert as before to the Church Missionary Society.

That copies of the foregoing resolutions be printed and circulated in Calcutta and it's vicinity; that the subscription of all persons friendly to the improvement and happiness of India, be solicited, and more particularly that the ladies of Calcutta be respectfully invited to visit and inspect the Schools, and to bestow on them whatever degree of countenance and support they may find them entitled to.

That every lady subscribing or collecting to the amount of 32 Rupees annually, be considered a Member of this Society.[5]

The Right Hon'ble Lady Amherst, wife of the then Governor-General Lord Amherst, consented to be the patroness of the Ladies' Society. There were eight vice-patronesses of the Society. On its Committee sat thirteen European ladies, exclusive of the Secretary Mrs. Ellerton and Superintendent Mrs. Wilson. Two other ladies were subsequently engaged to assist Mrs. Wilson in her work. Under these

[5] *Lushington*, pp. 199-203.

distinguished auspices the Ladies' Society set to work in right earnest. The Church Missionary Society through whose initiative the Ladies' Society was formed, reserved to itself the right of taking over the charge of these schools whenever the latter would discontinue. There were many subscribers to the Society, the annual subscription being fixed at Rs. 32. It was stipulated that there would be an annual meeting of the subscribers when the progress of the Society's work would be reported. We have it on the authority of Pearychand Mitra that among the subscribers to the Society, the Hindus were not a few.[6] They took keen interest in the proceedings of the Society.

The Ladies' Society commenced its work with twenty-four girls' schools and four hundred scholars to its credit. But we learn from Pandit Gourmohan Vidyalankar's *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* (third edition) that in 1824, there were in existence at least fifty girls' schools in Calcutta, and if on average sixteen girls studied in each school, the number of scholars would run to eight hundred. This number then must have included those conducted by the Female Juvenile Society as well in different parts of the city.

Like those of the Juvenile Society, the reports of the Ladies' Society, too, are not available. In reconstructing the history of its proceedings we shall have to depend mainly on the summary of its annual reports, and the accounts of annual examinations of its scholars that appeared in newspapers and periodicals from time to time. The number of schools, scholars, those examined publicly, the curriculum followed, and the efforts at founding a central female school—all these can be apprised from them. The following table will show at a glance the progress

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[6] *David Hare*, p. 56. 1877.

made by the promoters of the Ladies' Society in the cause of female education between 1822 and 1827:

Year	*Girls' schools*	*No. of girls*	*Those examined*
1822	8	200	—
1823	15	300	110
1824[7]	24	400	100
1825	30	500	—
1826	—	540	200
1827	—	600	170

This rapid increase in the number of schools and scholars of a single Society shews that public schools for girls were being eagerly sought for by the citizens of Calcutta, and for the matter of that, by the Hindus who formed the bulk of the population. We are told that the respectable classes also were sending their female wards to these institutions. This fact was stressed in the inaugural meeting of the Ladies' Society in one of the resolutions quoted above.

From the accounts of these examinations we learn also of the course of studies pursued in the girls' schools. Along with the three R's, geography (in higher classes with map-pointing), history, stories of the Bible and certain chapters of the *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* formed the subjects of study. Needless to add, great emphasis was laid on the teachings of the Bible. In higher classes needle-work was also introduced. All the scholars could not be assembled at annual examinations, and some sort of test examination was adopted. As is evident from the above table, only the selected ones sat for these examinations. Those present were satisfied with the progress made by the examinees in their studies. The best ones received presents, such as, pieces of coins and *saris*.

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[7] At the end of the year the number of schools was 29 and scholars 490. See *Lushington*, p. 195.

The two detailed accounts of the annual examinations of the girl-students of the Ladies' Society's schools for 1824 and 1825 give us an insight into the efforts of the promoters of female education. These will also show how the cause of female education received a great impetus from the Indian gentry. They gave proof of their practical sympathy not only by their presence on these occasions, but by their munificence. Of the annual examination held on 16th December, 1824 in the Library-room at the Church Mission premises, Mirzapur, Calcutta, the *Missionary Intelligence* for December, 1824 wrote partly as follows:

> The children, divided into four classes, had been previously assembled in an adjoining room, about one hundred in number, one class of which, beginning at the lowest, was conducted into the room as soon as Lady Amherst and suite had arrived. The business of the day then commenced, and the children were examined by the Rev. Mr. Wilson, Mrs. Wilson, and the Rev. Dr. Carey, who kindly volunteered his services on the occasion. The whole of the examination was in Bengalee, and the classes were successively questioned on the Gospel of St. Mathew, Watt's Catechism, Pearce's Geography, and a very useful work defending and stating the benefits of Female Education, written by a learned Native. Some specimens of writing and needle-work were also exhibited which were highly creditable to them. As many of our friends may not have well understood what was going forward, it will afford them pleasure to learn that the children, considering the very short period they are permitted to remain under instruction, have given general satisfaction to those friends who are most actively engaged in promoting their welfare. They answered readily the questions put to them, and evinced in their reading a manifest improvement. It was with peculiar pleasure that we observed a little child, not more than three years old, when brought near to Lady Amherst, repeating correctly the Lord's Prayer, with a naivete and forwardness peculiar to the Natives. Her father, the Sircar at one of the Schools, had taught her this prayer.

The examination of the children being over, they were rewarded according to the proficiency they had made. To eighty of the most deserving girls given a Sarrie or native dress; to others four annas in silver, and to the remainder two annas.

In an adjoining room a great variety of elegant Fancy Articles, lately sent out from England by benevolent Ladies, for the benefit of the Institution, were exhibited for sale. And here we cannot withhold our tribute of praise from those Ladies who kindly lent their aid in order to dispose of these articles; nor could we help admiring those two Ladies who so zealously exerted themselves in making collections for increasing the funds of the Society. There were few who left the room without having been tempted to purchase from our fair friends, and we understand they have been so fortunate as to realize by the Fancy Articles, Sicca Rupees 1000, independent of the collection for the Central School, which amounted to above Sicca Rupees 700.

From our acquaintance with the Natives we have reason to conclude, that the want of Female Education is beginning to be felt among them, though they do not yet know how to abandon their inveterate prejudices and suspicions, which do not permit their females to appear in public, after a certain age. Another barrier is the mistaken notion of the inability of females for the higher studies, and their being thought to be sufficiently learned, when acquainted with domestic affairs, and with the style of dress considered beautiful among them. There are, however, some among the better classes of Natives, who expressly wish the mind of their females to be improved. It was therefore not the least gratifying circumstance of the day of the examination, to witness the attendance of several Native Gentlemen of rank and consequence, giving thereby countenance to the education of Native Females, and expressing their full approbation of the measures adopted for their instruction. Among these were Maha Rajah Sheebkrishnoo Bahadour,—Baboo Kishensuckah Ghosh,—Baboo Nilmonee Dass,—Cassicanth Ghosaul, &c. Nor was the interest taken by the middle and lower orders of Native Society discouraging; far from it! for when the news of this examination spread among them, and more particularly when they heard that Lady Amherst and other Ladies of the highest rank in this country,

had condescended to patronize the education of their children, general rejoicings and mutual congratulations took place amongst them.

One main object of the Ladies' Society was to establish, at an earlier date, a central female school in Calcutta. As is clear from the above that collections were made for this purpose in Calcutta, Bombay and London. Since 1824, at each and every annual examination there used to be a show of fancy articles. Most of those present bought them at high prices and thus contributed to the fund. In this connection the gift of Raja Baidyanath Roy of Jorasanko deserves special mention. It was at the time of the fourth public examination on 23rd December, 1825, that he donated twenty thousand rupees for the erection of the Central Female School. This fact was noticed in the newspapers of Calcutta, and the *Samachar Darpan* of Serampore.

The *Missionary Intelligence* for December 1825 gives a detailed account of the fourth annual examination, in which this fact was emphasised. I make the following relevant extracts:

On Friday morning Dec. 23rd, the fourth public examination of the girls was held in the Old Church room in the presence of the Right Honourable Lady Amherst, Patroness of the Society, the Honorable Miss Amherst, the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, Mrs. Heber, Mrs. Harington, the Venerable Archdeacons of Calcutta, and Bombay, several of the Clergy, ladies and gentlemen of the highest respectability, together with the Rajah Bidenauth Roy, Rajah Shibkishen, and a large body of Native gentlemen. The children were examined in suitable schoolbooks which give an account of the fall of man and his redemption, of the Commandments, of the Lord's Prayer, &c. &c. Several of them repeated Bengalee Hymns—others read part of the New Testament, and gave the meaning of the passages, afterwards they read and repeated a portion of the Geography, with which they appeared familiar. The Lord Bishop with the accustomed condescension and kind-

ness questioned them in Hindoostanee, respecting the different parts of the world, several of which places they could point out to his Lordship on the Bengalee Map. Afterwards specimens of their sewing were exhibited; a sampler of needle-work was presented to the Lady Patroness, as a mark of gratitude for the zeal she has manifested in the cause. A pair of bands were presented to the Lord Bishop, and another pair to the Archdeacon Corrie, as specimens of the children's progress. During the examination Rajah Bidenauth came forward in the noble spirit of liberality and gave a donation of Rs. 20.000 (Twenty thousand Sicca Rupees) to forward the cause of Native Female Education in the erection of a Central School. The Ladies having been apprized of his intention had prepared an elegant sampler in which were marked, '*May every blessing attend the generous Rajah Bidenauth*'. The sampler was presented to the Rajah by the Lord Bishop, to the great admiration and interest of the ladies and gentlemen who favoured the meeting with their presence. After the examination, the friends proceeded to inspect a large and elegant assortment of fancy articles, which had been presented by ladies in Calcutta and the Upper Provinces, and which were offered for sale to assist the funds of this great and good cause. The conduct of the Ladies who have zealously aided the work is indeed highly praiseworthy; for no less than eight hundred Rupees have been realised on this occasion for articles, which have been prepared by ladies in and near Calcutta during the past year. It may no doubt be expected that the noble example which the native gentlemen in Calcutta have before them in the *splendid donation* of Rajah Bidenauth, will soon produce its proper effect, in leading others to appropriate a portion of their immense wealth, either to the same object or to the support of other useful institutions, which have in view the good of their fellow-men.

The paper wrote that after the examination, a collection was made amounting to 500 Rupees, which, added to the sum realized by articles sold, and the noble donation of Raja Baidyanath, amounted to 21,300 (twenty-one thousand three hundred Sicca Rupees).

One thing should be noted here. The Rani of

Raja Baidyanath was a lover of learning. She was coached in English by Mrs. Wilson at the palace of the Raja. She took particular interest in the establishment of the Central Female School and used to visit it, when established. It is, therefore, not very difficult to infer that the Rani also had a hand in the munificent gift of the Raja mentioned above.

With sufficient funds at its disposal, the Ladies' Society purchased grounds on the eastern corner of the Cornwallis Square. This place was then in the centre of the thickest, as well as the most respectable Hindu locality. Rammohun Ray's Seminary was already there, within a stone's throw from this site. The foundation-stone of the school was laid by the Society's patroness Lady Amherst on 18th May, 1826, with great ceremony. It will not be out of place here to quote the *John Bull* of 26 May, 1826:

Central School. On Thursday last the 18th current the foundation Stone of the "*Central School for the Education of Native Females*" was laid on the east side of the fine new Tank at Huddoah Bagain, by the Right Honorable Lady Amherst; accompanied on the occasion, by the Honorable Miss Amherst, Mrs. Harington, Mrs. Prattle, Mrs. Ellerton, Mrs. Ballard, Mrs. Laprimadye, Mrs. Wilson, and several other ladies of the Society, under whose fostering care this very laudable object has attained so very promising an appearance. Raja Buddinath Roy Bahadoor, who so liberally contributed to this undertaking, was also present, and we have much satisfaction in observing on the ground, the Venerable Archdeacon Corrie, the Hon'ble Mr. Harington, the Hon'ble Captain Amherst, Mr. Prattle, Mr. Ballard, Mr. Lamprimadye, Major Beatson, Mr. Wilson, Mr. Robison and some other gentlemen who have taken an interest in the institution.

After the ceremony was performed by Lady Amherst, and a most excellent and appropriate prayer offered up by the Venerable Archdeacon Corrie, Rajah Buddinauth Roy Bahadoor, by means of his vakeel, addressed Lady Amherst in terms of deep gratitude for the obligation she was bestowing on his

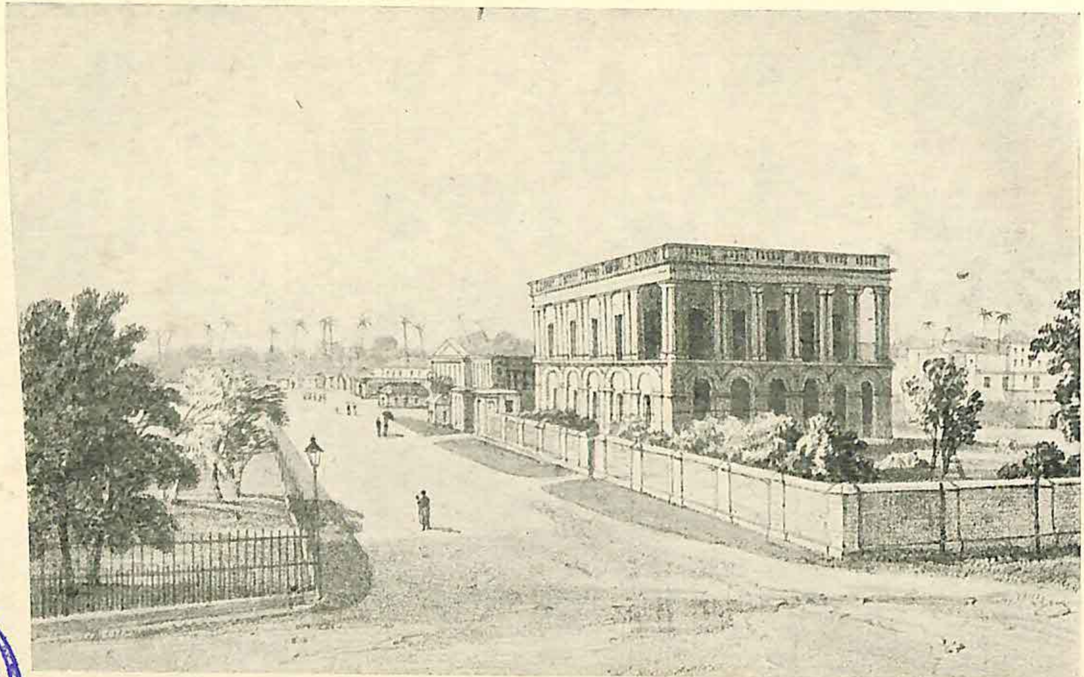
countrymen, and congratulating her Ladyship and other ladies on the success of attending their exertions.

The ceremony was witnessed by a large assemblage of natives, who seemed to take great interest in the same, and we are particularly struck and pleased at observing a preponderating number of females, and their female offspring.

The brass plate deposited here with the following inscription tells us in brief the story of the efforts of the Ladies' Society in founding this institution:

CENTRAL SCHOOL
for the
Education of Native Females,
founded by Society of Ladies,
which
was established on March 25, 1824,
Patroness:
The Right Hon. Lady Amherst.
George Ballard, Esq, Treasurer.
Mrs. Hanna Ellerton, Secretary.
Mrs. Mary Ann Wilson, Superintendent.
This work was greatly assisted by a liberal
donation of sicca rupees 20,000
from Rajah Boidonauth Roy Bahadur.
The foundation stone was laid on the
18th May, 1826, in the seventh year of the reign of
His Majesty King George IV.
The Right Hon. Wm. Pitt. Lord Amherst,
Governor-General of India
C. K. Robison, Esq., Gratuitous Architect.

The construction of the Central Female School building was well in advance by the middle of 1827. The activities of the Society were in full swing. The strength of the students in the Society's schools was six hundred, of whom four hundred attended them on average daily. Of them one blind girl proved to be the most proficient. She was decidedly the best of the lot. The Society's income during the year 1826-27 from both monthly and annual subscriptions



The Central Female School
from *Hindoo Female Education* (1839), by Priscilla Chapman
By Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

amounted to Rs. 5,876. Even before the construction of the Central Female School was complete, Mrs. Wilson, Superintendent of the Society's schools, was collecting girls in a house nearby, in order to give them lessons together, thus saving much labour and unnecessary troubles.[8]

From the account of the fifth annual examination held on the 14th December, 1827, we can make an idea of the nature of instruction given in the higher classes of these schools. It should be noted that among the six hundred scholars only one hundred and seventy were allowed to sit for the examination. I make the following extracts from this account published in the *Missionary Intelligence* for December 1827:

The examination commenced with the children singing the Hymn in Bengali আমার উপর কর দয়া etc., after which the *Third* class was examined; the children repeated Watt's Catechism, conversations between a Mother and Daughter on the advantages of education and answered questions arising out of the subject they read or repeated from memory. The *Second* class read portions of a short History of the Bible translated from the English, and which has been introduced into these schools about 9 months. They then answered questions arising out of what they had read respecting Creation, the Fall of Man, History of Cain and Abel, the Flood, etc. The *First* class examined, consisted of some who have been longest under instruction. The fluency with which they read in the Gospel of St. Mathew, Ellerton's dialogues on Genesis gave great satisfaction. They answered also questions put by the Archdeacon, interpreted to them, as to the meaning of the Parable of the Sower, and the Parable of the tares and the wheat, in a way which proved that they had imbibed, to a considerable degree, right ideas of moral good and evil, and of a future state of retribution. This class is instructed in the elements of geography, and of cyphers; they write also, and spell with toler-

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[8] *Samachar Darpan*, July 28, 1827. *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*, Vol. I. Third Edition. P. 18.

able correctness....The examination was concluded by the children repeating the Lord's prayer in Bengalee.

Two years required for the completion of the new building. The Central Female School was formally opened on 1st April, 1828 with Mrs. Wilson as its superintendent. This historic building still stands on the south-east corner of the Cornwallis Square, and accommodates the B. T. College for women run by the authorities of the Scottish Church College. The following tablet has been inscribed on its ground-floor in English and Bengali respectively:

The
Central School
Founded by a Society of Ladies
for the education of
Native Female Children
was greatly assisted by
a liberal Donation of Rs. 20.000 from
Rajah Buddinath Roy Bahadur
and its Objects were further promoted
and funds saved by
Charles Knowles Robison Esquire
Who planned and executed the Building.
1828

এই
মাধ্যমিক পাঠশালা
এতদ্দেশীয় বালিকাদের শিক্ষার্থে
সম্ভ্রান্ত খ্রিষ্টান স্ত্রী-সমূহের এক সমাজ কর্ত্তৃক
স্থাপিত হইল
তন্নিমিত্তে
শ্রীমান রাজা বৈদ্যনাথ রায় বাহাদুর
অতি সচ্ছলরূপে বিংশতি সহস্র মুদ্রা প্রদান দ্বারা
বিশেষ সাহায্য করিয়াছেন
এবং ইহার প্রয়োজন সকলের তদতিরিক্তসাধন ও অর্থের আহরণ
শ্রীল শ্রীযুত চার্লস নোল্‌স রবিসন সাহেব কর্ত্তৃক হয়
যিনি ঐ গৃহের পাণ্ডুলিপি, পরে তদনুসারে গৃহনির্ম্মাণ করেন।
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The fourth annual meeting of the Ladies' Society took place on June 17, 1828. Those present included, besides over a hundred European ladies, the Lord Bishop of Calcutta, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Raja Baidyanath Roy, Kashi Nath Mallick and several other Indian gentlemen of note. The annual report, presented at the meeting, indicated the changes for the reorganisation of the Society's schools during the year under review. We can make an estimate of these changes from the summary of the report given by The *Government Gazette* of Calcutta.[9] The *Gazette* wrote:

> The report stated the completion and occupation of the Central School, and the collecting of the children who used to assemble in twenty-nine schools into four principal divisions, situated as near as possible at the exact distances, in four separate directions from the Central School. The number of children in daily attendance...was stated to be at the Central School seventy; Shaum bazar, in the north-east quarter, eighty; and at each of the other three schools, thirty; making a total of 240. This, though considerably below the number previously enumerated, is considered by Mrs. Wilson as affording a more probable amount of actual benefit to the children under her care, as they come almost daily under her immediate inspection, and their progress can be more accurately attended to. Four schools at Burdwan, in which about 100 girls assemble, are again revived under the care of Mrs. Deerr.

It appears that like the Female Juvenile Society, the Ladies' Society, too, extended its activities to the moffussil and instituted girls' schools there. The Society received handsome donations from different quarters. The gentlemen present at this annual meeting also contributed handsomely—the Indian gentlemen alone giving two thousand rupees on the spot.[10]

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9 Quoted in *The Asiatic Journal* for January 1829: Asiatic Intelligence —Calcutta, p. 89.

10 *Samachar Darpan*, June 28, 1828, Vide *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*. Vol, I. Third Edition. Pp. 18-9.

The first public examination of the pupils of these reorganised schools was held on the 17th December, 1828 at the Central Female School. One hundred scholars, selected from these schools, sat for the examination. For the convenience of both the examiners and the examinees, the latter were divided into four classes and examined in their respective courses. Accounts, published in the contemporary newspapers,[11] show that in these reorganised schools the curriculum underwent no change, the Biblical lessons predominating as before. The girls, all of tender years, shewed remarkable progress in their studies. Bengali was the medium of instruction. A new class of monitors or teachers was introduced in the Central Female School. They, too, appeared for the first time at this examination. The Rev. James Long in his *Hand-Book of Bengal Missions,* (1848, p. 429) writes:

> Young as they [monitors] were, they were all either widows, or forsaken by their husbands; they had been educated in the schools of the society, and when they became destitute, they had recourse to Mrs. Wilson, who was thus able to employ them in the service of their countrywomen.

This class in the Central Female School formed the nucleus of the future female normal school to be stated later on.

The annual examination took place as usual next year on Nov. 4, 1829. This year only one hundred and seventy girls were in daily attendance in the Society's schools, and about eighty appeared at the public examination. The visitors present were all satisfied with the proficiency which the scholars exhibited. The examination was held also in the year

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11 *The Government Gazette,* Dec. 18, and *John Bull,* Dec. 19, 1828. Quoted in *The Asiatic Journal* for June 1829: Asiatic Intelligence—Calcutta, p, 752.

following, but nothing noticeable happened.[12]

The eighth annual meeting of the Ladies' Society came off on the 10th August, 1831. The Society had now extended its activities as far as Allahabad. The annual report 'detailed the state of the Central school at Calcutta, the schools at Mirzapore, Burdwan, Culna, Patna, Benares, and Allahabad.' Upwards of 500 girls were educated at these schools.

It has already been stated that the curriculum of these schools included mainly the texts on Christianity. As a matter of fact, teaching Christian doctrines to the young learners and carrying through them the Gospel to the Hindu homes, the very 'stronghold of superstition' (in the then missionary parlance), were the two main objects of the educational endeavours of these Christian Societies. But their success in the latter fell far short of their expectation. The authorities of the Ladies' Society soon began to express dissatisfaction at the actual results of their work. They even noted in the above annual report:

> In no case has the instruction of children been found to affect, to any extent, the adult part of the population. On the contrary, the influence of their seniors checks, to a most painful degree, the benefits which might flow to the children themselves from the pains taken in their instruction. In a great many cases, it is feared, the authority of friends and the influence of abounding wickedness goes to obliterate from the children the good received in the school.[13]

When the intentions of the Ladies' Society became manifest, the respectable classes gradually withdrew their help, as they had previously done with regard to the Female Juvenile Society. *The Reformer* (Dec. 19, 1831), the editor of which was

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12 Summarised from the *John Bull*, Nov. 4, 1829. Cf. *The Asiatic Journal* for April 1830: Asiatic Intelligence—Calcutta, p. 193.

13 *The Asiatic Journal* for February 1832: Asiatic Intelligence—Calcutta, p. 82.

the celebrated Prasanna Kumar Tagore, while dilating on the state of women's education in Bengal generally, referred to the public examination of the girls of the Society's schools held on 14th December 1831 and made a pointed reference to the defects of the system of education adopted therein. The paper writes with special reference to the Central Female School thus:

> The design of this institution appears to have been to qualify its pupils for the purpose of going into respectable families, to instruct the women who are not in the habit of appearing abroad; but by the system of education which has been adopted, we fear it will fail to produce the happy effects which had been anticipated. The pupils of this institution consist for the most part of the lowest castes, who are not permitted to frequent the houses of the respectable natives. For these it will be difficult to find access to the respectable females, particularly when it is known that their education consists chiefly in the knowledge of the New Testament and the Religious tracts. Prejudice of caste, and the stronger prejudice which the generality of natives continue to entertain against Christianity, are at present likely to raise an insurmountable barrier against the success of their endeavours. Had not the founders of the Hindoo College given a pledge that the religion of the pupils would not be interfered with, the same obstacles would have stood in the way of that institution, and it would never have achieved the wonderful spread of education which has flowed from it.

The Reformer then advised the authorities so to reform and liberalise the system as to be acceptable to the people:

> We would recommend a more liberal system of education to be adopted in the Female School. Let its pupils be initiated into general knowledge, and its managers pay a particular attention to the national prejudice of those whom they wish to educate. They will then be more likely to succeed in the laudable object of their undertaking, and we have no doubt their instruction will commence to cause the spread of

knowledge amongst the Hindu females, which the Hindoo College has done amongst the men.[14]

The salutary advice of *The Reformer* was not paid heed to. No change worth mention was effected in the curriculum or in the mode of teaching in the Central and cognate schools. The study of the Biblical literature continued to be emphasised. Though the authorities of the Society did not feel very happy over the actual results, the progress the girls themselves were making in their studies, elicited praise from other Christian quarters. *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for December 1832, noticed their tenth annual examination as follows:

The Tenth Annual Examination of the Native Female Children, under the general superintendence of Mrs. Wilson, took place at Central School, on Friday morning the 7th instant.

There were present about 300 girls, all of them, we believe connected with the Central School. Several of the lower classes were examined in the Bengalee Epitome of the Bible... and about 40 girls of the higher classes read each a portion of the Gospels in the same language....

The results of the examination were very satisfactory, and we think, that the cheerful, cleanly appearance of the children, with the general indications of intelligence sparkling in their countenances, must have afforded high gratification to the friends of these truly benevolent exertions.

After the Examination, there was a sale of fancy articles, the profits of which, we understand, are to be devoted to female education generally.

A new class, called the 'orphan class', was introduced in the Central Female School in the early thirties. During the floods in Southern Bengal in 1833 and the famine in the Upper Provinces in 1834, Mrs. Wilson collected destitute girls, one hundred and eight in number, and gave them shelter in the

14 Quoted in *The Asiatic Journal* for June 1832: Asiatic Intelligence—Calcutta, pp. 80-1.

Central School premises. They were admitted into the orphan class. This class was making considerable progress under Mrs. Wilson's direct care and supervision. It was noticed in an account of the examination of the pupils of the Central Female School in 1833. As this account also gave an insight into the working of the institution and the progress or otherwise of its scholars, I make the following extracts from it:

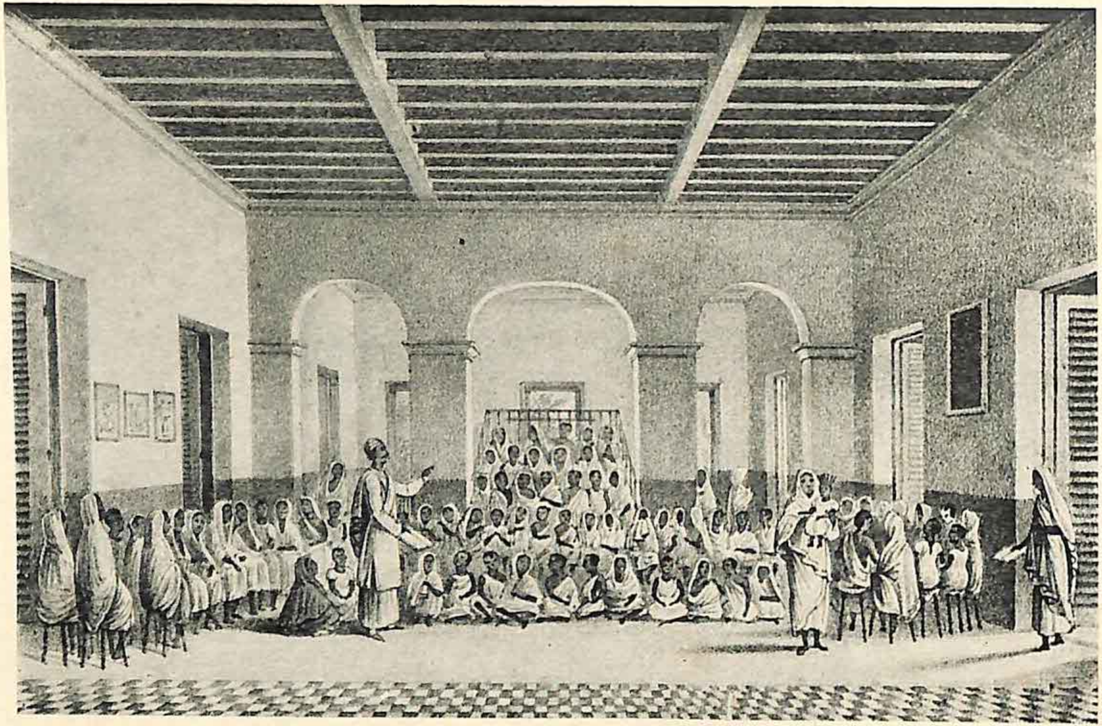
Calcutta Schools. During the past month [*i. e.*, December 1833], the annual examination of the private and public schools of Calcutta took place...Lady Bentinck honored Mrs. Wilson's Native Female School. There was one class which has evidently improved, and that is the orphan class. The Children composing this interesting class are constantly under the superintendence of Mrs. W. and are carried on with their studies from month to month and from year to year; every annual examination therefore shows their advance. The other classes make out but little progress; constantly being removed by their parents, the same girls are scarcely ever seen at two yearly exhibitions; improvement therefore, to any extent, is out of the question. The most unqualified praise is however due to Mrs. Wilson for her perseverance in the lower classes, and for the improvement of her orphan charge.[15]

Mrs. Wilson was also eager to teach Hindu boys. Bhudeb Mukherjee, the great educationist and literary figure of the nineteenth century took his English lessons from Mrs. Wilson, while a student of the Indian Academy originally of Raja Rammohan Ray. The school was at a stone's throw from the Central Female School. Bhudeb was introduced to Mrs. Wilson through W. M. Woolaston of the Government Sanskrit College.[16]

Mrs. Wilson continued her work in the Central Female School till October 1836. She had been feeling badly the need of a separate institution for the

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15 *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for January, 1834.
16 Bhudeb Charit, Vol. I, p. 38.



Interior of the Central Female School
from *Hindoo Female Education* (1839), by Priscilla Chapman

By Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

orphan-destitutes under her charge. It was mainly through her efforts that a home for them was built at Agarpara, a few miles off Calcutta. It came to be known as the Female Orphan Refuge. Mrs. Wilson transferred her activities to the Refuge on 21st October 1836. We find her engaged in it even in 1840.[17]

Mrs. Wilson continued her work up till some time in 1842, when she left the institution for good. A change had come upon her religious views and she seceded her connection with the Episcopal Church. *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for February 1842 (p. 116) wrote about this matter as under:

Secession of Mrs. Wilson from the Episcopal Church.—We understand that *Mrs. Wilson* is about to leave the Institution at Agarpara and to secede from the Episcopal Church. The reason for the adoption of this step is, that she has embraced the views of what are called the Plymouth Brethren. It is her intention, so soon as a Superintendent shall arrive for the Refuge at Agarpara, to remove to a neighbouring spot, and turn her attention to the religious welfare of adult females. The property at Agarpara has been made over to the Church Missionary Society.

One should be curious to know the future activities of such a benevolent lady. She served the Plymouth Brethren for three years, and left Calcutta by the middle of 1845. This event was again noticed by *The Calcutta Christian Observer* in June 1845, which wrote that:

Mrs. Wilson, for many years the indefatigable friend of Native Female Education, proceeded to Europe on the *Precurson* Steamer. She was a woman whose all had been devoted to the cause of Christ, and hence on her retirement from this the so long honoured field of her arduous labours, she had no funds to fall back...Several friends in England who had known her long and will, anticipating her arrival

[17] *The Calcutta Courier*, January 10, 1840.

in England without any provision, have subscribed, with a view to purchase her a competent life annuity, £800...We are gratified to find that the Indian subscription already amounts to more than Co's Rs. 2000.

Mrs. Wilson then returned to England, 'full of years and deserving of all honor, yet with her vigour unabated and her strong mind as ardent as on the day when she first set foot on the plains of Bengal.'[18]

In 1837 the superintendence of the Central Female School passed on to Miss Thompson and Mrs. White. The school was in existence for a pretty long time and served the cause of women's education in India in its own way. In 1840 the Ladies' Society was maintaining only three schools in Calcutta besides the Central one, namely, the Mirzapore School, the Circular Road School and the Howrah School. The total strength of scholars in these four schools was about five hundred. Children of the Christian converts now mustered strong in these schools. This time we find the Rev. K. M. Banerjee taking interest in the cause of the Society.[19] The activities of the Ladies' Society were gradually circumscribed. And in 1852, it was supporting only the Central Female School in Calcutta. It had, however, six schools under its charge at the Krishnagàr station. *The Friend of India* for April 29, 1852 noticed the activities of the Ladies' Society at this time with particular reference to the Central Female School as follows:

The Ladies' Society for Native Female Education...The Association of ladies under this name was formed in 1824, with the view of promoting and extending the great undertaking then commenced by Mrs. Wilson...From that time to the

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[18] *The Calcutta Review* for July-September, 1855: "Native Female Education" by Dr. Thomas Smyth, p. 83.

[19] *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for February, 1840: "Ladies' Society's Schools." p. 101.

present, for a period of six and twenty years, the Society has continued its quiet endeavours to impart instruction to the native female community of Calcutta, accompanied by that extent of Christian teaching without which they deem the work of education to be incomplete. At their schools at the centre of Calcutta, female children of all castes receive daily instruction, and it is found that there is as little difficulty on the score of caste, as in the Government or Missionary Colleges, where the Mahomedan sits side by side, and even reads out of the same book, with the highest class Hindus. The course of instruction comprises reading and writing in the vernacular, general information in History, Geography and Arithmetic, and plain needle-work...A thorough knowledge of the scriptures is also imparted...

The Central School is also a boarding school for Christian girls, and has six other establishments of a similar kind connected with it in Kishnaghur...

As has already been said, the Central Female School was also serving the purpose of a normal school for many years. When a normal school was actually started on February 25, 1852,[20] it was deemed wise to get the Central Female School amalgamated with it. But this work of amalgamation took at least five years to be carried out. Both the schools were united in 1857. The Rev. Edward Storrow, author of the life of Bala Soondari Tagore, daughter-in-law of Prasanna Kumar Tagore, writes about this unification in his *Our Indian Sisters* (p. 212) as follows:

A most important step in advance was the formation in 1851 (?) of the *Normal School for the training of Christian Female Teachers.* There was urgent need...for some influential organisation to supply competent teachers for schools and private visitation. The Normal School was founded for the purpose....Mrs. Wilson's Central School had for some time made this a part of its main aim, and in 1857 the two institutions were united under the title of Normal, Central and

20 *The Friend of India,* March 18, 1852.

Branch Schools, and ever since have rendered invaluable services to the cause of female education.

With this unification the work of the Ladies' Society perhaps came to a close. Its services to the cause of female education in Calcutta in particular, and in Eastern India in general, in spite of its over-emphasis on the teachings of Christianity, cannot be forgotten.

CHAPTER IV

THE LADIES' ASSOCIATION

Like the Female Juvenile Society and the Ladies' Society, the Calcutta Ladies' Association for the Native Female Education, too, did some pioneer work in this direction in early nineteenth century. It appears from the contemporary records that Mrs. Wilson and her husband the Rev. Isaac Wilson took initiative in forming this Association. The Association was founded with two distinct objects. One was to facilitate the establishment of a Central Female School, which would be under the charge of Mrs. Wilson. The other object was to extend education among the Native Females of Calcutta and its vicinity. With these two objects in view, a general meeting of ladies was held on 14th January in the old Church-Room of the Missionary Society, the Rev. Mr. Craufurd presiding. After some discussion the following rules with a short preamble were unanimously adopted for the guidance of the Association:

Convinced of the great advantages which are likely to be produced among the females of this country by a general system of education, and witnessing the zealous exertions which are making in Calcutta by the Ladies' Society for Native Female Education, it appears highly desirable that more extended efforts should be attempted to further this laudable object.

I. For this purpose it is resolved to form an Association, to be called "THE CALCUTTA LADIES' ASSOCIATION FOR NATIVE FEMALE EDUCATION."

II. That the designs of this Association shall be, to assist the funds for building a Central School, and to extend education among the Native Females of Calcutta.

III. That this Association be under the management of a President, a Treasurer, and a Committee of Ladies, one of them to act as Secretary and Sub-Treasurer of the Association.

IV. That Mrs. Wilson be President, Mrs. Greenway, Secretary and Sub-Treasurer, and the Revd. Mr. Craufurd, Treasurer of the Association.

V. That the following ladies form the committee for the present year with power to add to their number: *viz.*

Mrs. Brown, Mrs. Blackburn, Mrs. Croll, Mrs. Elton, Mrs. Lambert, Mrs. LLewelyn, Mrs. Murray, Mrs. Moore, Mrs. Richardson, Mrs. Rozario, Mrs. Seymour, Mrs. Sherriff, Mrs. Shearman, Mrs. Wallis, Miss Blackburn, Miss Doley, Miss E. Doley, Miss Edmunds, Miss Heberon, Miss Judah, Miss Jones, Miss Kipling, Miss Maflin.

VI. That any Lady subscribing or collecting 12 rupees or upwards annually, or superintending a school, shall be considered a Member of this Association.

VII. That Meetings for the dispatch of business be held on the second Monday in every month, and that five Ladies including the Secretary be competent to act.

VIII. That a General Meeting be held once a year, when an account of receipts and disbursements shall be presented and a new Committee chosen.

IX. That subscriptions or donations in aid of the Association be received by the President, Secretary, Treasurer, or any other member of the Committee. Such subscriptions or donations being designated "*for the Central School*" or "*for the Schools under the management of the Calcutta Ladies' Association.*"[1]

Another public meeting of the ladies was held on 28th January 1825 to further explain the nature of this Association. An 'Address' was prepared on the subject, and the Rev. Isaac Wilson read it before the meeting. The Address noted the progress already made in the direction of native female education and asked the friends of female education to exert more for this laudable object. I make the following extracts from the Address:

In less than three years, 30 Native Female Schools have been formed, and between 5 and 600 girls are now under instruction in the different Schools, supported by the Ladies'

[1] *Missionary Intelligence* for January, 1825.

Society for Native Female Education. Several of these have made rapid progress in reading the Bible—the first classes can all write, and many of them can perform interesting specimens in needlework.

The designs of this Association are intended to enlarge the work which has been so favourably commenced, and is increasing with the most unparallelled and encouraging success. Since the prospect of apparent good among the Hindoo females was first made known, the cause has received the warmest support and encouragement from all classes of the community, and especially the Ladies of this Presidency.

Convinced, however, that much more might be done to increase the good work, and give well-disposed individuals more immediate opportunities of casting in their mite, and contributing to this cause—the Ladies, who form the Committee of this Association, have undertaken to superintend Native Female Schools in their own neighbourhood, or collect sums to any amount for the enlargement of their plans. Should any surplus of money remain after defraying the expenses of the Schools under their charge, it is proposed to be given to the Fund for building a Central School, the importance of which has been so long admitted, and so frequently advocated.

In conclusion, the Committee of the Ladies' Association for Native Female Education, would respectfully solicit the attention of their own Sex in particular, to aid this laudable work, either by forwarding interesting communications on the subject of Girls' Schools, or by Donations and Subscriptions from themselves or their friends.[2]

The Rev. Wilson further explained the nature and advantages of a Central Female School. A Central School, he added, would be highly desirable from the nature of the work. It would save much of a Superintendent's time, which is now necessarily spent in going to several small schools. Much exposure to the sun would be prevented for as the schools lay at considerable distance, the work must either be left undone, or else those who visited them must endure great fatigue in the hot season, which,

[2] *Ibid.*

to say the least, was oppressive, if not sometimes dangerous. It would afford opportunities of viewing the work in its various branches when brought into one general establishment, and would allow the children greater advantages of acquiring more solid information with better principles and habits in a much shorter time. It promised the greatest success, for if one individual had, (by the blessing of God) effected so much by steady perseverance under so many disadvantages, and in the commencement of so novel an undertaking, what might not now be expected when the work was so widely extended, and so many Native Females already in a state of preparation.

About Rs. 300/- were collected in the meeting. This sum added to a second donation of Rs. 200/-, received for the Central School in the following morning, amounted to about Rs. 500.

One thing should be noted here. The exertions of the Ladies' Association would have been a sealed book to us, had not some of the files of contemporary newspapers and periodicals been unearthed recently. I find no mention of this Association even in the books published in the thirties of the last century. Only the Rev. James Long has left a very short account of its activities in his *Hand-Book of Bengal Missions,* published in 1848.

As we have already seen, the annual meetings of these educational societies, and the public examinations held under their auspices were duly noticed in the newspapers of those days. *The Government Gazette* Supplement for February 20, 1826, quoted from *John Bull* an account of the first annual meeting of the Calcutta Ladies' Association, which came off on the previous 13th February. From this account

we learn that the Association was able to open six schools, distant from those founded by the Ladies' Society. These schools were superintended chiefly by the ladies residing in their immediate neighbourhood. It was able to collect upwards of two thousand rupees in the very first year and contributed one thousand rupees from this amount towards the construction of the Central Female School of the Ladies' Society.

The second anniversary of the Association was held on the 29th January, 1827. During this year the Association set up six more schools. A paid superintendent was appointed in the person of Miss Hebron. But as she had to leave the station in course of the year, her work was voluntarily taken up by the eight young ladies, who visited the schools alternately. The following excerpts from the report presented by its secretary the Rev. Isaac Wilson speak much about its schools and scholars and the books they read:

> Since that report [the first report] was published your committee have been supporting twelve schools, but two of these were closed some time since, for want of funds, the remaining ten schools contain about 160 girls, most of whom are Mahomedans. It is found by experience that this class of children leave school at an earlier age than the children of the Hindoos.
>
> The catechisms and other preparatory books suited to the ages and capacities of the children have been used in the schools, and the highest classes read the Gospels.

The report further referred to the second annual examination held on the 4th December, 1826. Some of the examinees read with ease, and answered many interesting questions to the satisfaction of those who examined them. Monthly examinations were regularly held during the year in the Intally schoolroom.[3]

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[3] *Missionary Intelligence*, January, 1827.

Most of the schools of the Calcutta Ladies' Association were situated in the Entally and the Jaun Bazar area. For want of funds it was not possible for it to maintain so many schools. In the third year its Committee was compelled to make some new arrangements. We read in the third report:

> Your committee reported at their last annual meeting that ten schools were in operation during the past year: they have been obliged, for the want of funds, to close some of them and the rest they have drawn into two large schools: in one of which (Benutollah) forty children daily assemble, and in the other (Chappatollah) about twenty-five attend.[4]

The report also states that in the year under review, seven young ladies undertook the task of superintending the schools. They alternately instructed the girls of these schools in Bengali. "By these labours of mercy the most salutary effects are produced both in preventing the inattention of the teachers and children, and also in securing to the latter a larger share of instruction and proper discipline than can possibly be effected by a limited attention by a more numerous circle of schools." A few of the children learnt plain needle-work, but their chief attention was directed to reading, and the books in use were Watt's catechism, Bible History, and the Gospel.

The third annual examination of the scholars took place in November, 1827. The progress was maintained as in the previous year.

The Calcutta Ladies' Association continued for some years more. I have not been able to procure any of its reports or their summary or any account of the public examinations held under its auspices between the years 1828 and 1833. From a brief notice of an annual examination held on the 19th of

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[4] *Ibid*, February, 1828.

March, 1833, we learn that activities of this Association had been very much contracted and it was maintaining only one school at that time on the Circular Road. The following extracts show that the school was almost converted into an institute for Biblical lessons.

The fourth class repeated Watt's Catechism, which contains an Epitome of the Christian religion. The third class read 'Abridged Biblical Histories,' and answered questions put to them on the history of mankind from the creation to the time of Moses, and other questions on the Gospel History, the way of recovery from the fall, etc. The second class read the 10th Chapter of St. John and explained, and answered questions on the whole Gospel History. The first class read the last Chapter of St. Mark, and answered with readiness and propriety not only questions, which arose out of the lesson, but many promiscuous ones on the Scripture History, and on the Christian Doctrines. The whole concluded with the children repeating the Lord's Prayer, and singing a Hymn in Bengalee.[5]

I have already referred to the brief account left by the Rev. James Long in his book (pp. 439-40). He also tells us that at the end the Association maintained only one school. His account throws some light on its internal working. I give the relevant portions here:

This Association was instituted in 1824,[6] with a view to establish schools for native girls in those parts of Calcutta which could not be undertaken by the 'Ladies' Society for Native Female Education'; it carried on its operations for nearly ten years, on the same principles as those on which the Central School is conducted, though on a more limited scale.

The efforts of this little Association were formerly carried on in the small detached schools: but in course of time it was found necessary to unite the whole in one central spot. The children were taught by masters; the school, however, was al-

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[5] *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, April, 1833, p. 191.

[6] This is evidently a mistake. It must be 1825.

most daily visited by a lady of the committee six of whom attended in rotation for many years.

It is only within a few months that a suitable young Christian couple have been found, and appointed to take charge of work. The school is, therefore, now placed in their hands and is going on steadily. This couple have the assistance of an elderly Christian woman, and three little monitors, drawn from the upper class.

The Calcutta Ladies' Association was in existence for nearly ten years. Long says that it was discontinued some time in 1834.

To sum up, the services rendered by these pioneer associations, cannot be over-estimated. In this connection the zealous efforts of Mrs. Mary Ann Wilson deserves special mention. That the Hindu gentry encouraged these associations by more ways than one, has already been told. Both the Hindu and the Mahomedan middle class of Calcutta sent their female wards to these institutions. But as the years rolled on, the underlying motive of the promoters of these societies, namely, inculcation of the Christian doctrines into the pliable minds of the young, came on the surface; and not only the gentry but the poorer classes, too, gradually withdrew their co-operation. The schools, maintained by these bodies, later on became mostly the haven of Christian converts. Priscilla Chapman wrote in 1839:

Both the Central School and the Refuge are conducted on those pure Gospel principles which distinguish the Church of England, and it is to the missionaries of the Church, that converts are given over to baptism.[7]

Sixteen years after, Dr. Thomas Smyth declared rather more pointedly:

We will not conceal the fact, that our own earnest desire

[7] Hindoo Female Education, p. 174.

is that India were thoroughly christianised and we regard our Female Education as an important means towards that end.[8]

It was mainly for this reason that public schools for girls were not popular even among the poorer classes. After continuous efforts for a decade and more, the first non-communal and non-religious public school for girls was established in Calcutta in 1849. John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune was the principal promoter of this institution. In this he was largely assisted by a few of his Indian friends. This event, at once interesting and important, will be dealt with in a subsequent chapter. Now the activities of the Serampore Mission will be told at some length.

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8 "'Native Female Education'' in *The Calcutta Review*, July-September, 1855.

CHAPTER V

THE SERAMPORE MISSION

The Serampore Mission of Carey, Marshman and Ward did much for the cause of women's education in Bengal in the twenties and thirties of the last century. The Mission's educational activities dated as far back as 1816. It was in this year that the Rev. Joshua Marshman in his *Hints relative to native schools, etc.,* proposed to establish elementary schools on modern lines, where instruction would be given through the medium of our mother-tongue only. Nay, he went even one step further. He argued that our mother-tongue should be used as medium of instruction even in the higher stages of education. He also laid down several rules for the improvement of our provincial languages. On the lines suggested in the *Hints* the Serampore Mission opened a large number of boy's schools in and around Serampore. Of these schools John Clarke Marshman, son of Joshua Marshman, writes:

> The plan for the extension of education among the natives, which was introduced to public notice in the Hints, had succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectation. Contributions poured in with a degree of liberality which marked the confidence the missionaries enjoyed in Indian Society. Within a twelvemonth, schools were established in a circle of about twenty miles round Serampore, at the earnest request of the inhabitants. The report recorded the opening of forty-five, in which two thousand children received the elements of knowledge in their own language.[1]

Indians were always eager to give education to their children. The missionaries received substantial help from the well-to-do and men of influence in their

[1] *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward,* etc., vol. II, 1859, p. 157.

educational endeavours. J. C. Marshman notes this particularly when he says that "in some instances, men of influence had offered their own house, and in other cases the family temple, for a school-room. Children were attracted to the schools from the most respectable families. Instruction was welcomed with great avidity throughout the district.'"[2]

The educational activities of the Serampore Mission were at first confined to the opening of boys' schools only. It was not until the return of Ward in 1821 that they turned their attention to the education of our girls as well. I should say in passing that Miss Cooke, afterwards Mrs. Wilson, accompanied Ward to India in the same boat. Of the origin of the female schools of the Serampore Mission J. C. Marshman writes:

> He [Ward] and his colleagues had always acted on the principle that a native Christian mother must, at the least, be qualified to teach her children to read the Bible, and that female ignorance and Christianity could not exist together. But they were anxious to extend the blessings of knowledge also to heathen families, and, after Mr. Ward's return, he took the department of female education into his own hands, and established numerous schools in and around Serampore, which were vigorously maintained after his death [on 7th March, 1823].[3]

Some of the Indian gentry in and around Serampore took much interest in the work of women's education. They assisted the missionaries in this matter just as they had been doing with regard to the boys' schools. An examination of the girls of the Serampore schools was held on April 5, 1824. The *Samachar Darpan* of Serampore, dated 10th April, 1824, writes on the occasion as follows:

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 126.
[3] *Ibid.*, p. 303.

Examination—There was held an examination of the girls of the schools of Serampore and its neighbouring villages in the house of Babu Gopal Mallik in front of the Serampore Court buildings on Monday, the 5th April, at 10 A.M. Many European ladies and gentlemen were present on the occasion. In all, two hundred and thirty girls belonging to thirteen girls' schools were assembled at that place. Of them, fifty read words, thirty-five went through short story-books, and the rest spelt, which greatly satisfied those present. Mrs. Marshman then gave cloth, four-anna pieces, pice and pictures as prizes to the girls. After being one and all treated to sweets they returned to their own houses. The Rev. Mr. John Mack read out the reports of these schools, and everyone was satisfied. Stockings, handkerchiefs, bags, etc., prepared by the girls, were exhibited and their workmanship pleased the visitors very much.[4]

In the following year the number of schools must have increased. For J. C. Marshman writes: "In the course of the present year [1825] more than three hundred children were assembled in the college hall and passed a very satisfactory examination."[5]

Reports of these schools or accounts of examinations of their scholars are not available for the following two years. But it is evident that their number was largely on the increase. I have been able to get at a detailed report of the girls' schools run by the Serampore Mission upto the 1st January 1828, in *Missionary Intelligence* for February, 1828. By this time the Serampore Mission had extended their educational activities and opened girls' schools to such far-off stations as Aracan and Allahabad. A short account of the fourth annual examination of the Serampore Schools has also been given in this report. An idea of the course of studies pursued therein can be made from this account. Needless to add, the

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[4] *Translated. Cf. Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*, vol. 1, p. 16. Third Edition.

[5] *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, etc., vol. II. p. 303.

Christian scriptures formed a principal subject of study. Of the aforesaid examination *Missionary Intelligence* writes:

The Fourth Annual Examination of the *Serampore* schools was held, on the 22nd of February last, in the College Hall. The number of girls present was about *Two Hundred* and *Ten*. Of these eighty in all, read in books; thirty read the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter; five, Henry and his Bearer; fifteen, Mr. Ward's Scripture Extracts; and thirty, the Gospel according to Mathew. These books were used on this occasion as affording the means of a convenient classification of the children, according to their several attainments, and not because they are the only books used in the schools. After the reading exercises were finished, a class of fifteen were examined in Geography, and besides exhibiting their acquaintance with the most prominent features of the globe, by the ready use of the map, they repeated from memory the Geographical definitions, and descriptions of the various countries of Asia. The Christian girls then repeated portions of several catechisms and concluded their exercises by singing a hymn.

The Serampore Mission opened girls schools at different centres in Bengal and some at such distant stations as Akyab, Benares and Allahabad. The above report contains an account of these schools of Serampore and other centres, submitted by their superintending ladies. A short history of each of these schools, course of studies, number of students, their average attendance etc. were given with necessary comments. These will prove both interesting as well as illuminating even today. The account begins with the Serampore Schools thus:

THE LIVERPOOL SCHOOL, it will be remembered, is the one in which the girls of the Christian Preceptory are educated, and which meets in one part of the house in which they reside adjoining the mission premises. The number of children now attending it is eighteen, of whom sixteen are the daughters of Christian parents. Within the last year, four

of the girls of the first class have left school, to be married; and we trust they will, in the new relation, which they now sustain, give proof of the beneficial tendency of the instructions they have received. None of them have laid aside their books. The first class has been in some degree recruited from the others, and now contains three children, who are rivalling their predecessors in the rapidity of their progress in every branch of their learning. They have lately committed to memory the Serampore Geography, and can bear questioning upon any part of it. They have gone through several catechisms within the last few months, together with 'The Parables of our Lord', a selection published by the Calcutta Tract Society; and they are tolerably well acquainted with Scripture History. On Sabbath morning, they repeat hymns and portions of Scripture, and in this exercise are joined by their married companions, who come in with the native christian women generally, to attend worship in Dr. Marshman's house. The second class consists of four girls, who are reading the Scriptures, and committing to memory the Parables and a Catechism. The third class contains two little girls, who have lately made very rapid progress, and one of whom has been at school only a few months. They are reading the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter, and committing to memory Watt's Catechism, in Bengalee. The other children have not yet begun to read in books. Six of the scholars have made some progress in knitting, &c.

THE CHATHAM UNION SCHOOL, during the greater part of last year, contained twenty scholars, but lately the number has been increased to *thirty-one*. This increase has arisen from an arrangement, by which the Cardiff school has been added to it. It was found, that the proximity of the two schools caused a clashing of interests, which was injurious to both; and the master of the Cardiff school, having failed to effect any adequate progress in the instruction of his scholars, it was deemed best to dismiss him, and unite both under the master of the Chatham school. The measure has been attended with the happiest results. The school is now held in the house which was built for the Cardiff school, and we have assigned another well established school to our kind Friends at Cardiff. The first class of the Chatham school, till lately consisted of five girls, but two of the most promising have been

removed by their friends. This class reads the Scriptures, and committed to memory, for the last Examination, the Ten Commandments and the Lord's Prayer. The eldest girl has written a letter of thanks to the Ladies and Gentlemen at Chatham, by whose liberality the school is supported. The second class consists of four, who are reading the 'Conversations between a Mother and Daughter.' The whole of the remaining children are, still, only in various degrees of progress in the elementary spelling lessons.

WILLIAMS'S School, (Dhoolia-para), contains *fourteen* girls. Three of these constitute the first class. They write well, and are reading the Scriptures. The school sustained a great loss by the death of the most promising little girl, who was the child of an old servant, and was intended by her mother, for the future school-mistress. She fell a victim to the smallpox, some months ago, whilst on a visit to some friends in Calcutta.

The second class consists of two little girls, who are reading the 'Conversations between a Mother and Daughter.' The others have not yet commenced reading in books.

THE ROSS SCHOOL (Mala-para) has not revived during the past year, as we expected it would do. It contains *fourteen* children. In the first class are six girls, who are able to read all the books generally used in the schools. They likewise write very well, and are acquainted with the simpler rules of arithmetic. Two other girls are learning the compound letters; and the remaining six, who are very young, are in the alphabet.

THE CHARDIFF SCHOOL (Burgy Bagan) has been established for more than three years, and with a little increase of attention we hope to see it in a flourishing condition. It contains *twenty* children. Some have been removed, whose progress by this time would have been considerable; and there are now only five who are reading in books, and these are not advanced beyond the most elementary lessons. The remainder are in spelling leasons, &c.

THE POBREE TOLLAH SCHOOL contains *fourteen* children, the majority of whom are of Portuguese extraction. Five or six are reading in books, but their progress has been very unsatisfactory. A new master has lately been placed in the school, and it appears to be improving under his care.

THE CHELTENHAM SCHOOL (*First Maheesh*) contains *twenty* girls. In the first class, there are four, who are very diligent; they are reading the Scriptures, and excel in writing. The other children have mostly but lately joined the school, and are in various degrees of progress in the alphabet and spelling tables. The school is in a promising condition, and is well situated, in the midst of a respectable population.

THE GLASGOW SCHOOL (*Second Maheesh*) contains *twenty-two* children, and is in a very flourishing state. The master is attentive, and the girls are uncommonly diligent and docile. The first class consists of four, who have gone through a number of books, and are now reading the Scriptures. They committed to memory with great precision the Ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer, some months ago, and are willing to undertake anything of which they are capable. They are now preparing some pieces of knitting, for their generous benefactors in Glasgow. The second class contains five children; the master's little daughter, whom we mentioned in our last Report, is one of these. She has made rapid progress, and is so anxious to improve that she is generally the first at school in the morning, and often employs herself, before her father makes his appearance, in collecting her companions. She committed to memory the Lord's Prayer, with the intention of repeating it at the last examination, but her father's bramhunical prejudices so far gained the ascendancy that she was not permitted to be present. The other children are in the alphabet and spelling tables.

THE DUNFERMLINE SCHOOL (*First Ishera*) is attended by sixteen children, whose progress is very fair. The two girls who were mentioned in the last Report, as being far advanced in their learning, have since left the school; but their places have been taken by two others who are now reading the scriptures. The first in the class is a little girl who scarcely knew her letters six months ago, but who has made astonishing progress. The other children are not far advanced, many of them having only lately joined the school.

THE STIRLING SCHOOL (*Second Ishera*) contains, as formerly, *twenty* children, and continues to enjoy the same prosperity, under the master who has had charge of it from the beginning. The first class consists of five girls, who are at present reading the Scriptures, and commit to memory pieces

from their books, from time to time, of their own accord. The second class, also consists of five who although not equally advanced, yet evince quite as much willingness to learn as their superiors of the first class. As the children in this school are mostly the daughters of persons in easy circumstances, they are very regular in their attendance.

THE EDINBURGH SCHOOL *(Nubagram)* contains *twenty six* children, and continues under the same master, and is in the same pleasing state as at the date of our last Report. There are five girls in the first class, who have finished Lawson's Natural History, and are now reading the Scriptures. In the second class are two girls, who are reading the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter. Two of the most advanced scholars have gone away to be married, and one very promising little child was carried off, a few months ago, by a fever of only two days' continuance. The attention of the children in the neighbourhood of this school is truly gratifying, and their attendance at school very regular.

THE EXETER SCHOOL *(Chattera)* now contains *twenty-two* children. This increase has taken place within the last few months, in consequence of the appointment of a new master, the former one having disappointed our expectations nearly as much as his predecessor. The school now wears a very promising appearance. The little girl mentioned with so much approbation in our former reports, has not made that progress which might have been expected, her mother having kept her at home for about six months, some time ago. She is still, however, at the head of the school, and continues as fond of her book as ever. She is now reading the Scriptures, and committing a Catechism to memory. The second class consists of two children, who have read the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter. One of these is married, and attends school in opposition to the wishes of her relatives. Another little girl has lately begun the Conversations, but the rest of the children are still in the elementary lessons.

Since the Autumn of 1826, we have employed one of the female members of the Church, to teach such of the native Christian women as were unable to read, at their own houses; and the plan has been attended with very gratifying success. She goes from house to house, and gives daily lessons to her scholars, whose progress is ascertained by their reading at Mrs.

Marshman's meeting on Sabbath morning. There are now thirteen women benefitting by her instructions; and about ten of them are able to read books, some the most elementary, and others the Gospels.

Two these particular notices of the several schools at Serampore, we shall now add, as usual, a table of the numbers in attendance at them all.

		List	Average
1.	Liverpool School	18	17
2.	Chatham Union (Bullubhpore)	31	23
3.	Williams' School (Dholiapura)	14	12
4.	Ross School (Mala-para)	14	12
5.	Cardiff School (Burgy Bagan)	20	16
6.	Pobree Tollah School	14	10
7.	Cheltenham School (First Maheesh)	20	14
8.	Glasgow School (Second Maheesh)	22	18
9.	Dunfermline School (First Ishera)	16	14
10.	Stirling School (Second Ishera)	20	16
11.	Edinburgh School (Nubagram)	26	22
12.	Exter School (Chattera)	22	19
	Christian Women	13	13
	Total	250	206

It will be observed that the number of the Serampore Schools is less by two than at the date of our last Report, as we found it adviseable to discontinue that begun at Barrackpore and as previously mentioned, the original Cardiff school has been merged in that of the Chatham Union. The number of children under instruction, however, is greater than at the date of either of our previous Reports.

The Report next gives an account of the school run by the other centres. Of the Birbhum schools we find:

The Schools at Beerbhoom, under the care of Mrs. Williamson, have much increased in number, and otherwise made good progress, since the date of our last Report. Besides the Preceptory for the daughters of Christians, there are now five schools for Heathen and Moosoolman girls. It is true the

number in attendance in these schools is smaller than is usual in other places; but we trust that it will soon be enlarged.

In the Preceptory, there are *ten* children, whose progress is very remarkable. Nine of them are reading in books, and the other will soon be able to do so too. The first four read very well, and have committed several Catechisms, and part of the Geography to memory; they have also made good progress in writing and arithmetic, and in knitting and needle-work. The next four are not so far advanced, but are making good progress in the same pursuits. The ninth has finished the Conversations and the last has not yet finished the elementary Tables. We have received some very neat pieces of work done by these little girls, which we propose sending to England for sale, and as samples of what is done.

The Sewry School has been established sixteen months, and contains ten girls, of whom three are reading the Fables, and the remainder the spelling lessons.

The Tilpara School has been established ten months and contain six children, none of whom have yet finished the spelling Tables. The Teharah School has also been established ten months; it contain *seven* girls, none of whom can yet read. The Anondopore School has existed eight months, and contains six girls and the Hoosenabad School, which has been established only two months, contains five.

The Beerbhoom Schools, therefore, stand thus:

Christian Preceptory	10
Sewry School	10
Tilpara ditto	6
Teharah ditto	7
Anondopore ditto	6
Hoosenabad ditto	5
	44

Of the Dacca Schools the Report says:

For a great portion of the time that has elapsed since the date of our last Report, the Female schools at Dacca enjoyed considerable prosperity under the superintendence of Mrs. Charles Leonard; but they were deprived of that advantage, by her sudden and lamented death in August last. The Chirstian Female School was then of necessity relinquished

altogether, but the native schools have been continued, and we trust that the superintendence of Mr. Leonard and Mr. Domingo will prevent their greatly declining either in numbers or efficiency. The last report we received from Mrs. Leonard, gave the following particulars of the schools:—

In the Narundeeya School the number of scholars was thirty three. Nine girls were reading in the Conversations, Fables, &c. and the remainder were in spelling lessons and the alphabet.

In the Ram-gunj School, the number of scholars was thirty-six. Of these, twelve were reading the easier books in use; and the others were in the Elementary Tables.

In the Dya-gunj School, the number of children was twenty-eight. In this school two children were reading the scriptures, and seven the easier books; the rest were in the elementary Tables.

In the Keranee-gunj School, the number of children was twenty-seven. Seven were reading the first books; and the remainder were still in the Tables.

In the Christian School, there were eighteen children. The schools at Jumma-Kaal, and Ray-Saheb-bazar, had been discontinued for some time.

By our latest accounts, it appears that two new schools have been established at Jinjeerah, and Bunyan-nugur; and the following table exhibits the average attendance at all the schools.

Narundeeya School,	20
Ram-gunj ditto,	20
Dya-gunj ditto,	20
Jinjeerah ditto,	24
Bunyan-nugur ditto	16
	100

The number upon the lists we should suppose to be about 140. This amount exhibits a very considerable falling off from previous accounts; but it must be remembered that when it was taken, the schools were suffering severely from the return of the great heathen festivals.

The account of the Chittagong Schools, four in number, is very interesting. We have notices regarding these schools in the following extracts.

At the time of the submission of the Report the last-named school was discontinued:

Of the Chittagong Schools, we have recently received very interesting notices. Although they do not enjoy a uniform prosperity, yet their efficiency is always encouraging. In March last, Mr. Johannes held an annual examination of each of the schools, in the presence of the parents and other relatives of the children, and sent us the following account of the results:—

The first school, which is also the most flourishing is at Mudder-baree, and contains fifty girls, forty-six of whom attended the examination. The school is divided into four classes. The first read the Gospels, and gave verbal explanations of what they read; the second read in the Fables; and the last two classes read in easy lessons in manuscript, and the spelling tables. Most of the girls in these two classes were very young, their age not exceeding six years.

The next school in order of establishment is Moradpore. The number of children has been increased in it from ten to seventeen. A very few of them read in the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter.

The third school is at Bhalooa-diggy. The number of girls here is thirty-two all of whom attended the examination. The first class read the Gospels: and the others the spelling lessons. When I visited this school last month (February) I saw some very clever girls, who gave me very great satisfaction, but I understand they have since left the school to be married.

The fourth school is at Baut-Dewan, in which there are sixteen girls. Four have commenced reading in books; and the others are in easy reading and spelling lessons.

In most of the schools, the parents attended, and testified their joy at the proficiency made by their children. All suspicion and prejudice seemed to have vanished away. If anything could have excited them, it would have been the Gospel in the hands of their children, who read aloud the praises of the Saviour.

After the examination I asked the children several questions which many of them answered in Scripture words. I concluded by exhorting them to be obedient to their parents; to love the reading of God's word; to reflect upon the brevity of human life, and seek the way that would lead to life ever-

lasting. I reminded them that, whilst many of the roads to happiness tended only to disappointment, that pointed out in the Gospel was sure, and so simple that if they would attentively read it, and pray to God for ability to understand it, they would easily find it. All that I said was heard with attention and approbation.

Several respectable Moosoolmans have called on me, and said, that if I would employ them, they could easily establish schools in the villages, and over the water. For every girl that leaves the schools spreads the fame of them and the knowledge of our exertions inspires the people with a desire that their villages might profit by them.

Since the date of the above communication, the last mentioned school has been discontinued, and the numbers in attendance in the others considerably reduced—but we have no doubt the reduction will be merely temporary. According to our last accounts, the schools stand thus:

Mudder-Baree School	35[6]
Bhalooa-Diggy School	30
Moradpore School	12
	77

About the schools in other centres, the Report say:

In Jessore, we have, within these few days, had a school committed to our care. It was raised more than a year ago, and has hitherto been supported, at the expenses of Mrs. Pigou, the lady of H. M. Pigou, Esq. Judge of the District; who assiduously superintended it, with the assistance of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas. Mr. and Mrs. Pigou however, having the prospect of removing to another part of the country, have requested us to undertake the charge of it, which we have with much pleasure agreed to do. The following account of the school we have had the honor of receiving from its benevolent founder; it contains about *fifteen* girls. Some of them read The Miracles of our Saviour (a selection published by the Calcutta Tract Society), and the Fables fluently. Many read

[6] The decrease in this school has arisen from the circumstances, that another Mooluvee, commenced another school near it, and took away a great number of the scholars in the expectation that Mr. Johannes would employ him. In that he was very properly disappointed, and now has set himself to injure Buxally the old master.

the Conversations between a Mother and Daughter, Catechisms, &c. and nearly all can repeat the Serampore Catechism, and Watt's First Catechism. Mrs. Pigou's tailor has been accustomed to superintend their needle-work for two hours in the afternoon. We may add that a considerable proportion of these scholars are the children of our native brethren at Jessore.

In the Christian Colony, in the island of Akyab, district of Arracan, a female school has with much difficulty been established. As yet it contains only five girls, and one woman, but we have no doubt that it will soon be enlarged.

The School at Benares is still continued. It is attended by *thirteen* girls; eight of whom are able to read books with ease.

At Allahabad, Mrs. Mackintosh continues to afford instruction to a few poor females; and her benevolent exertions are unattended with any expense to our funds.

The total number in attendance in all our schools, at the present time, will be seen by the following tables:

Serampore Schools	250
Beerbhoom Schools	44
Dacca Schools	140
Chittagong Schools	77
Jessore School	15
Akyab School	6
Allahabad School	5
Benares School	13
	550

I have not found any other report of these schools. J. C. Marshman writes that in 1831, "Of the female schools connected with the mission, that in Serampore was the most flourishing; the number in attendance was eighty-four. At Dacca there were seven schools with two hundred and nine scholars; at Chittagong five, with a hundred and twenty-nine; and one at each of the other stations, making an aggregate of four hundred and eighty-four."[7]

[7] *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward*, etc., vol, II, p. 450.

William Adam wrote in 1835: "...there are two in operation, one called the central school containing 138 girls, and a second called the Christian village school containing 14."[8]

The primary object of the Serampore Mission was, of course, the propagation of the Gospel, for the attainment of which they resorted to the spread of education among our countrymen in right earnest. Opinion will vary as regards their success or failure in this primary object of theirs. Most of their schools also disappeared in the course of time. But the services they rendered to the cause of Indian education, have been immense. The Missionaries of Serampore are still remembered as pioneers in advocating the cause of our mother-tongue to be the only suitable medium of instruction.

[8] *First Report on the State of Education in Bengal*, 1835. by W. Adam. Calcutta University. p. 68.

CHAPTER VI

PIONEER ATTEMPTS OF THE BENGALIS

The endeavours on the part of the foreign agencies, however, failed to catch the imagination of the people. Along with the three R.'s, the missionaries and their females as well as other European ladies made it a point to inculcate Christian doctrines into the pliable minds of the young girls. We have already seen that such patrons of female education as Raja Radhakant Deb and Raja Baidya Nath Roy gradually withdrew their co-operation as their extra-academic intentions became more and more evident. Even the sober advice of Prasanna Kumar Tagore through the columns of the *Reformer* in 1831 appeared to carry little weight with the authorities of those girl schools. A correspondent from Chinsurah wrote about the missionary schools for girls in the *Samachar Darpan* of March 3, 1838 as follows:

> A few benevolent European gentlemen and ladies, indeed, made some attempt to introduce female schools, but they have failed excepting in one or two places, where a small number of the very lowest classes attend the schools for the sake of clothing and other rewards.

The missionary endeavours could not, therefore, make much headway, so far as women's education was concerned. Raja Radhakant Deb's support to the cause of female education and Raja Rammohun Ray's efforts towards the general improvement of the status of Indian women have already been mentioned. 1829 is a landmark in the history of our national progress. It was in this year that Lord William Bentinck, as Governor-General, abolished the cruel custom of *Suttee* by passing a prohibitory

Act. This gave impetus to the cause of Indian women. The young scholars of the Hindu College were now thinking of the education of the females. In their paper *Parthenon,* published in early 1830, they wrote an article advocating women's education. Though publication of this paper was stopped by the College authorities for advocating extra-academic views, the allumni of the College did not hesitate to take up the cause of women's education and associated themselves later on, in all the endeavours made in this behalf. I will narrate their activities presently.

But before this let us see how others strove for the cause. Motilal Seal, the "Rothschild of Calcutta', held progressive views so far as the cause of women was concerned. He, along with Haladhar Mallick, proposed to form in 1837 an association with two objects in view, *viz.,* (1) to introduce widow remarriage in the Hindu Society and (2) to extend the blessings of education to the Indian females.[1] Motilal Seal later offered ten thousand rupees as an inducement to the person who would be the first among the Hindus to marry a widow. Even the students of other institutions began to discuss the subject with great ardour. At the annual examination of Gour Mohan Addy's Oriental Seminary held in March 1840, two essays were read by the students—one on 'Marriage' and the other on 'Female Education', which reflected credit on their authors. These were published in the *Advocate.*[2]

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[1] Samachar Darpan, April 29 1837. Cf. *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha,* Vol. II, Third Edition, pp. 98-9.

[2] *The Calcutta Christian Observer,* April, 1840, p. 223.

"The Prize Essay—We understand that the Committee appointed to decide on the merits of essays on the subject of 'Native Female Education' have unanimously accorded the prize (Two hundred Rupees) to the Reverend Krishna Mohana Banerjee. It is, we have been informed, an admirable production which like the other writings of the reverend gentle-

The ex-students of the Hindu College, most of whom became famous in after-life for their unstinted services to the Motherland, continued the discussion they had so courageously started in their student-days regarding the welfare of women. K. M. Banerjea, ex-student of the College and noted Christian convert, wrote a Prize-Essay on female education in 1840, for which he won the sum of Rs. 200. The essay was published in book-form under the title of *Native Female Education* in July, 1841. The subject-matter was considered so very important that the wife of the Commander-in-Chief, got it published in a revised and corrected form a few years later in 1848. The book provoked much discussion even in 1841, and Pearychand Mitra, also a famous ex-student of the Hindu College and a life-long worker in the cause of women's improvement, controverted some of the observations of K. M. Banerjea in a paper [3] read before the Society for the Acquisition of General Knowledge. In his book K. M. Banerjea traced the backwardness of Indian women and prevalent social conditions from the by-gone days due to the tenets in the Hindu *Sastras*, and advanced a plea for the education of Indian women in their own home by European ladies on the lines already pursued in the schools established for girls. As an example of the effectiveness of this domestic education, the Revd. Banerjea cited the example of Prasanna Kumar Tagore's daughter, whose untimely death he also mourned in this connec-

man, is characterised by much good sense and a vigorous and elegant diction. We wish it to be published.''—*The Calcutta Courier*, 3rd December 1840.

[3] A few desultory remarks on the "Cursory review of the Institutions of Hinduism affecting the interest of the female sex." contained in the Revd. K.M. Banerjea's Prize-Essay on Native Female Education.—*A Biographical Sketch of David Hare*, by Pearychand Mitra, p. 75.

tion. Let me quote relevant portions from the book (pp. 114-6):

The admission of European teachers for the education of *male* children has actually been offen allowed by the most respectable members of the native community, who considered it fashionable at one time to employ private tutors for their boys; and if an equal interest could be exerted in behalf of girls, many Baboos would doubtless realise of their own accord the idea of female instruction in the Zenana. In one instance at least, we know such a course had been pursued with considerable success. The provisions which Baboo Prosunno Coomer Tagore had made for the education of his late much-lamented daughter, were significant proofs of his sense of paternal duty, as well as of his energy and public spirit, and the happy effects produced by his exertions, were illustrative of the practicability of the plan we are recommending. For a Hindu gentleman of rank and station, so far to disregard the corrupt practices of a bigoted community, as to engage a European tutoress for the purpose of instructing a female member of his household in the several branches of a liberal education, was no ordinary exhibition of moral fortitude; and the success which crowned his efforts, was an earnest of what might be expected from similar measures; while the influence and reputation of a distinguished member of the Tagore family, must impart great consideration to so laudable a proceeding in the estimation of his countrymen. And it would not be chimerical to hope, that if instruction could be offered under the auspices of a well organised European-native Society, without demanding a sudden and violent revolution, as it were in the domestic economies of the Hindus, the cause of female improvement would gradually prosper, in Calcutta at least. While alluding to the almost unique example of Baboo Prosunno Coomer, it becomes extremely melancholy to reflect that the *first* native lady, perhaps, that had cultivated European letters and acquired European accomplishments, and to whose instruction large funds had been cheerfully dedicated, and every possible attention most gladly devoted, by an enlightened and affectionate father, should be snatched away in the prime of life, to the deep afflication of her parents, and the sincere regret of all that have heard of her.

In the above extract the Rev. K. M. Banerjea marked the utility of domestic teaching and implored the respectable classes of the community to adopt this course. And for this, as the author hinted, there should be a regular organisation. That would entail some expenses. Dr. Thomas Smyth, himself a missionary and a warm advocate of religious teaching in girl schools, dwelt at length on the feasibility of domestic teaching and suggested means to introduce the system at as much little expense as possible, in *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for March, 1840. He wrote, among other things, that:

> In the absence of prospects of worldly advantages, we must endeavour to make female education a respectable thing; and this can only be done by vigorous efforts to introduce it among what are commonly styled the respectable classes. But this again can only be effected by sending European ladies to teach the females in their apartments.

The same issue of the *Observer* also published the considered views of the Rev. K. M. Banerjea regarding female education in India, in the form of questions and answers. Here, he asked the European 'birds of passage'—the European officials and non-official businessmen—to do something tangible for the education of Indian women.[4]

Ramgopal Ghose, another alumnus of the Hindu College and a prominent figure in Indian public life, offered two prizes—one gold medal and one silver, for the best and second best essays on 'Native Female Education' to the students of the first and second classes of the Hindu College in 1842. Among the students of the second class who only participated in the competition, Madhusudan Dutt and Bhudeb Mukherjee came out successful and won a gold and a

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4 See Appendix.

silver medal respectively.[5] Both of them rose to eminence as literary figures in after-life.

The 'Young Bengal' headed by Ramgopal tried to give these efforts a practical shape through the Bengal British Indian Society of Calcutta. This Society, instituted early in 1843, was mainly a political body. But its members dealt with social questions with no less fervour. W. Theobald, Vakeel of the Supreme Court of Calcutta and President of the Society, referred to these aspects of their activities in his presidential address at its second anniversary held on the 5th May, 1845:

> Native polygamy was one of them. Some Hindoo members had gone so far as to wish for an Act to make it illegal. With equal propriety, the re-marriage of Hindoo widows had engaged the attention of the Society....
>
> With still greater satisfaction he referred to what the Society had done on the subject of Hindoo Female Education....
>
> The subject was cordially taken up by the Hindoo members who confessed the unfortunate ignorance of their females, and with so much earnestness had the object been pursued that, probably, at its next meeting, the Society will be prepared to establish a scheme for Hindoo Female Education.[6]

It was in this year (1845) that Jaykrishna Mukherjee and Rajkrishna Mukherjee, the public-spirited zemindars of Uttarpara, approached the Council of Education for assistance in starting a female school there. Later on, the Mukherjees prepared a scheme and submitted it to the Council in

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[5] About this prize I find the following in the *General Report* on Public Instruction, etc. for 1842-43:

"It is right here also to mention that a Native gentleman having offered a gold medal for the best and silver Medal for the second best essay on 'Native Female Education,' considered especially with reference to the effect on children of the next generation, Mr. Cameron, the Examiner, awarded the prize thus—the 1st to Moddoosoodun Dutt, and No. 2 to Bhoodeb Mookerjee of the 2nd class. The first class were unwilling to compete for the prize." Hindoo College Annual Report for 1842, *Appendix K*, p. LXXiii.

[6] *The Firned of India*, May 15, 1845.

August, 1849. They proposed not only to bear half the cost of the school-building which would amount to Rs. 2.000, but also to set apart some landed property accruing a monthly income of Rs. 60/-. This latter amount was half the required sum, the other half to be met by the Government. Apart from its practical aspect, the scheme, or plan as it may be otherwise called, shows how the respectable Hindus of Bengal were in earnest for catering to the education of their females. I insert the scheme here in full:

Relying upon the hopes of assistance held out by the Council in your letter No. 46, dated 11th June, 1845, we have been enabled at last to mature our plan for female education, and have now the pleasure to submit the following proposal for the favourable consideration of the Council of Education:

It has been observed by persons who have ably discussed the subject that insuperable obstacles exist in the way of educating the females of India, until some great change takes place in the social condition of the country and the utter impossibility is maintained of imparting education to the females of the respectable portion of the community under the peculiar manners, customs and habits of the people of India.

The education of the females of India, however, has not yet gone through that ordeal of actual experiment, which would enable us to form a fair criterion of the value of opinions expressed unfavourably to a subject of such importance.

Many respectable people of the neighbourhood concur with us in thinking that if an experimental school for the education of female children should be established here under the patronage of Government, it may, if successful, eventually lead to the establishment of others throughout the country. We therefore beg to propose to place in the hands of Government, landed property yielding a clear monthly income of 60/- rupees provided the Government will pay a like sum for the furtherance of the object—the cost of the building will be about 2.000 rupees, which shall be equally borne by the Government and ourselves.

We shall also give a suitable piece of land for the erection of a school-house.

We beg to subjoin a list of monthly expenditure prepared after due enquiries for the information of Government:

1.	Head European Mistress	Rs. 80
2.	Old Pundit	15
3.	Female servant	4
4.	Male servant	4
	Books and stationery, ...	7
	working materials, such as wool, cotton, and paint etc.	10
		Rs. 120

We need hardly add, that, to ensure success, the proposed Institution should not be only free of expenses to the pupils, but also the whole of the things worked by them should be given them gratis, independent of prizes, which particular individuals may earn by their own exertions.

The course of study should be confined exclusively to reading and writing the Bengalee language, painting, drawing and needle-work with this proviso that English education should be imparted to such of the pupils, whose parents or guardians may desire it by written application.[7]

The Council of Education discussed the important subject of female education as envisaged in the above scheme. John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, by virtue of his position as Legal Member of the Government, was at this time President of the Council of Education. He 'explained to the Council the grounds on which it had appeared to him expedient, that this experiment should be made, in the first instance, without connection with Government, and the same reason seemed to him applicable to other Institutions of the like kind'. In concurrence with this view the Council replied to the letter of the Mukherjees in which the above scheme was inserted, that 'they entertained a high sense of the value and importance of the subject

[7] *General Report on Public Instruction in the Lower Provinces of the Bengal Presidency*, from 1st May, 1848 to 1st October, 1849, pp. XXVIII-XXIX.

of female education, and appreciated fully the liberality and public spirit of Baboos Joykissen and Rajkissen Mukherjee, but at the same time they regretted that the existing state of the education funds would not permit them to entertain the proposal submitted.' Besides paucity of funds there was another weighty reason for not entertaining the proposal, and this is evident from the following:

The Council intimated, in addition, that a similar experiment was then being conducted elsewhere independent of the Government, and that they preferred awaiting the result of that experiment, to taking any steps in the matter of female education themselves at that time.[8]

Before referring to this experiment I would mention some other activities of the Bengalis in this behalf. Meanwhile, a free school for girls had been started at Barasat, 24 Parganas, in 1847. In this endeavour an ex-student of the Hindu College, Peary Churn Sirkar, took a prominent part. He was posted here in 1846 as the Head Master of the Barasat Government School. Dr. Nabinkrishna Mitra and his younger brother Kalikrishna Mitra, together with a few public-spirited men of Barasat, conferred with Peary Churn on this subject and the result was the opening of a free school for indigent boys and girls. It is said that Mr. Bethune, President of the Council of Education, took the cue of his school at Calcutta from the one at Barasat where he had gone to inspect educational institutions.[9]

Something should be said here of the activities of the Hare Memorial Meetings and the Hare Prize Fund Committee. In the former the speakers dilated, time and again, on the importance of women's

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[8] *Ibid.*, p. XXX.

[9] *Pearycharan Sarkar* (in Bengali)—By Nabakrishna Ghose. p. 69. 1300 *B.S.* This fact was referred to, perhaps for the first time, in the Bengali monthly *Bangamahila* for kartik, 1282 B.S.

education. The Hare Prize was awarded by the Committee in 1849 to Tarasankar Sarma, a student of the Sanskrit College, for his Bengali essay on 'Hindu Female Education'. While discontinuing the bestowal of prizes in October, 1864, the Committee resolved to apply the fund 'to the preparation of standard works in the Bengali language calculated to elevate the female mind.'[10] Many useful books were published from this fund. The trustees of the Hare Prize Fund included such ardent advocates of female education as Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitra, the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, Shibchandra Deb and Debendranath Tagore.

Newspapers and journals run by the newly educated Indian also lent support to the cause of female education. *The Enquirer* of the Rev. K. M. Banerjea, the *Gnananweshun* of Rasikkrishna Mallik and Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee, all ex-students of the Hindu College, advocated the cause even in the thirties. *The Bengal Spectator* of Ramgopal Ghose and Tarachand Chakraborty, leaders of "Young Bengal", opened its columns for the discussion of not only female education, but also of women's general improvement. Pearychand Mitra and Radhanath Sikdar started a popular Bengali monthly called *Masik Patrika,* especially fitted for the study of our women-folk. *The Samachar Darpan* of Serampore, all along, took a keen interest in female education. Of the other newspapers and journals, more to be said in the following chapter.

[10] *A Biographical Sketch of David Hae.*—By Pearychand Mitra. Pp. 118-9. 1877.

CHAPTER VII

THE BETHUNE SCHOOL

The experiment referred to by the Council of Education was no other than the lay public school for girls founded by its President, John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune, in Calcutta on 7th May, 1849. Even while in England Bethune followed our educational efforts with keen interest. He felt very much depressed at the sad plight of Indian women. He considered education as the only means for their rapid improvement.

Bethune arrived in India in April 1848, as Legal Member in the Governor-general's Council. By virtue of his position he became President of the Council of Education. Here he made acquaintance with Ramgopal Ghose, also a member of the Council. Bethune wanted to start a public school for girls and apprised Ramgopal of his intentions. Ramgopal heartily acquiesced. He told his friends of Bethune's desire and presented them before the latter for mutual discussion. Bethune told them of his desire to set up a school for girls. They in their turn promised him all help and expressed readiness to send their daughters to the proposed school. Accompanied by Ramgopal, Bethune went to the Baitakkhana house of Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee at 56 Sukea Street, then known as Bahir Simulia, in search of a site for the proposed school. Dakshinaranjan was not at home at the time. On his return he learnt of Bethune's visit. Though not acquainted with Bethune Dakshinaranjan went to his place at the earliest opportunity and offered him his Baitakkhana house for the proposed school free of rent. He also offered his personal library worth about five thousand rupees

for the school. For the permanent habitation of the school he proposed to make a gift of five and a half bighas of land in Mirzapur for building a permanent structure there. He expressed his desire to give one thousand rupees more in cash. Dakshinaranjan came back home, made his proposals in writing and sent them to Bethune. Bethune accepted them with thanks.

Amongst others who helped Bethune to mature his plans, the name of Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar deserves special mention.

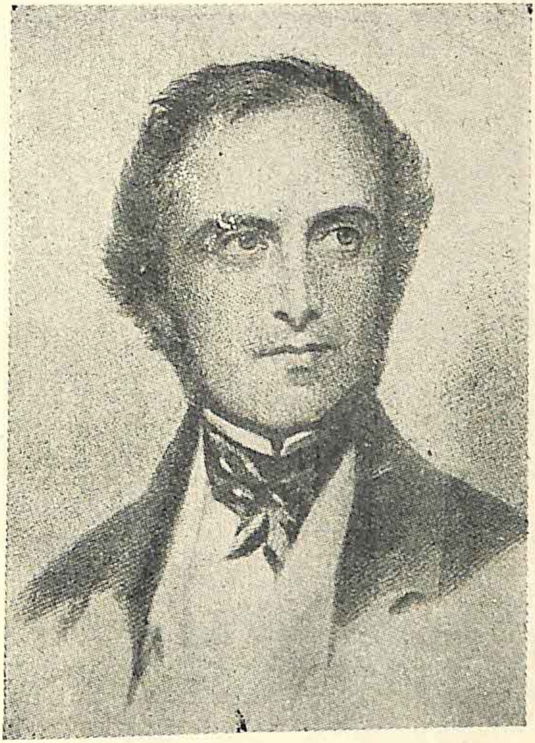
THE SCHOOL OPENED

Preliminary arrangements completed, Bethune started the school at the above place on 7th May, 1849 with twenty-one girls on the roll. The opening ceremony was very simple. Bethune delivered an address [1] suited to the occasion. He gave reasons for his not asking government help, for in that case the establishment of the school would have been delayed. He did not invite the leading citizens of Calcutta, such as Raja Radhakant Dev, Raja Kalikrishna, Asutosh Deb, and Prasanna Kumar Tagore, because they might not approve of the way of his approach or might try to impose their own method upon the new school. He also abstained from inviting European ladies and gentlemen, for in that case it might look like a public function. In his address he definitely called the school by the name of "Calcutta Female School."[2]

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[1] The address is given in full in the Appendix.

[2] There was some confusion at the time regarding the name of Bethune's school. *Sambad Prabhakar* called the proposed school on the morning of its opening day, "Victoria Bangala Bidyalaya". Two days after, on the 9th May 1849, as well as in some subsequent issues the paper mentioned it as "Victoria Balika Bidyalaya". But there is positive proof that this was a misnomer. In his opening speech, Bethune gave his school the distinct appellation of the "Calcutta Female School". Let me quote the relevant portion from his speech as follows:



John Elliot Drinkwater Bethune

Bethune narrated the nature of the course of studies as follows:

I ought not to conclude without saying one word on the nature of the studies that are to be pursued here. It is well understood by you all that the plan which has been uniformly followed in the Government Schools, of not meddling with the religion of your children, is to be strictly followed here. There are some, I know, who are very apt to sneer at the notion of learned females, and they may form an idea of the sort of education which we propose to give to these girls, which I think it very likely that I should be ready to join with them in ridiculing. But if any of you have done me the honour to attend to the remarks which I have had occasion to make in connection with the education of the boys of Bengal, you will see how constantly I have dwelt on the importance of sedulously cultivating their mother tongue, that I had told them that we resort to English, chiefly on account of the superiority of its literature, and that we expect of our students that sooner or later they will impart to their countrymen in their own language the knowledge which they have gained in ours. Judge then whether these opinions are not likely to be applied by me with ten-fold force to the education of girls, who are not called on to be the instructors of others except in the bosom of their own families. As far as literature, therefore, is concerned, we shall make Bengali the foundation, and resort to English only for some of those subsidiary advantages, and when we know that the communication of such knowledge is not in opposition to the wishes of the parents. Besides which, there are a thousand feminine works and accomplishments, with their needles, in embroidery and fancy work, in drawing, in many other things which I am not half so competent to describe as my friend Mrs. Ridsdale, whose province it will be to teach them. The knowledge of these things will give to

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"The time may come, and that at no distant period, when all reserve of this kind may be laid aside when the Calcutta Female School, by whatever other and more illustrious name it may then be known, shall take its proud place among the most honoured, as it will assuredly be one of the most useful institutions of the land."

Some discussion was going on at the time about naming the school after Queen Victoria, and the *Sambad Prabhakar* printed the name prematurely. The paper continued to mention the school as such till 4th June, 1849 after which it gave up this appellation and called the school simply as 'Balika Bidyalaya.'

your children the means of adorning their own homes, and of supplying themselves with harmless and elegant employment.

Bethune proposed that girls who lived at a distance would be taken to the school and sent back home in the school-carriage.[3] None but the girls of respectable Hindus would be admitted. And the school would work in the morning up to 9. An old Brahmin Pandit was appointed to give instruction in the three R.'s. Mrs. Ridsdale took charge of the industrial work.

Of the twenty-one girls who attended school on the opening day were the two daughters of Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Bhubanmala and Kundamala. Bethune made a special mention of Madan Mohan along with Ramgopal and Dakshinaranjan in his letter to Lord Dalhousie, then Governor-General, on the 29th March, 1850. He wrote:

> The three natives to whom I desire especially to record my gratitude for their assistance are Baboo Ramgopal Ghose, the well-known merchant who was my principal adviser in the first instance and who procured me my first pupils, Baboo Dukkhina Runjan Mookerjea, a Zemindar, who was previously unknown to me, but who, as soon as my design was published, introduced himself to me for the purpose of offering me the free gift of a site for the school, or five bighas of land valued at 10.000 rupees in the native quarter of the town and Pundit Madan Mohun Turkalankar, one of the Pundits of the Sanskrit College, who not only sent two daughters to the school but has continued to attend it daily, to give gratuitious instruction to the children in Bengali, and has employed his leisure time in the completion of a series of elementary Bengali Books expressly for their own use.[4]

The school thus opened was a lay public institution, and girls could attend it in large number. But attending schools was not yet the custom among the

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[3] On the carriage was written! "কন্যাপ্যেবং পালনীয়া শিক্ষণীয়াতি যত্নতঃ," that is, ''Girls, too, are to be brought up and taught with great care.''

[4] *Selections from Educational Records,* Part II, pp. 52-3. Also *see* Appendix.

respectable classes. The more conservative amongst them rose publicly against the school. Some of those who sent their girls before, were now prevented from doing so. The number of students at one time dwindled to seven, but it was a happy sign of the times that at the end of the first year the number rose to thirty-four.

Raja Radhakant Deb started a girls' school in his house at Sobhabazar, Calcutta, only fifteen days after Bethune had founded his institution.

The Barasat Girl School was remodelled on the pattern of the Bethune School, and some new girls' schools were started at Neebudhia, Sooksagar and Uttarpara. But there was local opposition. Some people of Barasat even put the organisers of the Barasat School to indignities. The Government did not help these institutions. The mischief-mongers took advantage of this fact and construed it as governmental antipathy to them. Bethune, in his famous letter to Lord Dalhousie already referred to, requested the Government of India to issue a circular-letter to the Local Government and through them to the Magistrates and the Council of Education to express public sympathy with these private endeavours. A circular was accordingly issued by the Government of India to the Local Government on 11th April, 1850. Thus the foundation of the Female School by Bethune had far-reaching consequences. It gave the signal for further efforts on the same line.

In the above letter to Lord Dalhousie, Bethune also requested him to sound the Court of Directors whether it would be feasible to name the institution after Queen Victoria. But the Court were still afraid of the conservative feeling of the people. In their despatch to the Governor-General, dated 4th September 1850, the Court of Directors signified their

approval of this pioneer attempt but could not accept the request of Bethune forwarded to them by the Governor-General. They did not "think that the present state of female education was such as to warrant the unusual proceedings of applying for the sanction of Her Majesty's name to the Female School at Calcutta."[5]

The Bengali newspapers of progressive thought, such as *Sambad Prabhakar* and *Sambad Bhaskar,* supported the school vigorously. A few others, presumably of the old school, however, took to spreading calumny. But the latter could not do much harm henceforward. There was the *Sarbasubhakari Patrika* started in August 1850 by the senior students of the Hindu College, who favoured female education. They enlisted the support of Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar and Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, the two ardent supporters of the women's cause. In the second issue of the *Patrika,* September 1850, Madan Mohan wrote a comprehensive article in defence of female education. We find at the end of this article that such persons of note and influence as Ramchandra Ghosal, Ramgopal Ghose, Pearychand Mitra, Ishan Chandra Basu, Gurucharan Yush, Rasiklal Sen, Sambhuchandra Pandit, Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, Pandit Taranath Tarkabachaspati, to name only a few, had already sent their daughters or female wards to the School of Bethune for proper and regular instruction. He also noted that Bethune was spending between seven and eight hundred rupees per month for its maintenance from his own pocket. Madan Mohan also wrote three children' primers in Bengali, two in 1849 and one in 1850, specially suited to the young girls.

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5 *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, p. 61.

Bethune did not rest content with writing the famous letter to Lord Dalhousie, which I have already mentioned. He took active measures for the propagation of women's education. A new edition of *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* was published under his auspices. On the receipt of a copy of the book, Raja Radhakant Deb wrote a congratulatory letter[6] to Bethune on 20th March 1851. In this letter he condemned the opponents of female education in no uncertain terms. Bethune purchased five hundred copies of Tarashankar Sarma's prize-book on female education for distribution to the mofussil girl schools and to those interested in the matter. By virtue of his position as President of the Council of Education, Bethune had to visit different centres of education in the Bengal districts, attend prize-distribution ceremonies at the Krishnagar College, the Dacca College, the Hugli College, the Patna College, besides the Hindu College in Calcutta, and deliver instructive addresses to the students. In most of these addresses he stressed the need of female education, and the duties the recipients of new education had to perform and the responsibilities they had to discharge in the direction of women's enlightenment. In February 1851 Bethune delivered an important address at Krishnagar in which he emphasised the need of women's education in these terms:

> The education of your females is the next great step to be taken in the regeneration of Hindu character...The practical difficulty which obstructs the good work is the seclusion in which you have for a long time been accustomed to think it necessary to confine your women...For her own sake and in her own right I claim for women her proper place in the scale of created beings. God has given her an intellect, a heart and feelings like your own and these were not given in vain...

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6 *See* Appendix.

I may not live to see this desirable goal attained but it is my firm belief that another generation will not pass away before it will be universally conceded that whoever neglected the education of his daughter disgraces himself.[7]

Bethune addressed the students of the Dacca College in March following, in the same strain. On this occasion he quoted from a speech of Sir Ersine Perry, President of the Board of Education at Bombay. Sir Ersine had encouraged Dadabhai Naoroji and his worthy collegue Mahadeo Sastree for their patriotic action by starting a female school there. Bethune urged the senior students of the College to take a lesson from their Bombay friends and emulate their example in right earnest. It is said that Bhagawan Chandra Bose, father of the great scientist Sir Jagadish Chandra Bose, then a senior student of the Dacca College, was greatly inspired by Bethune's speech and devoted much of his time and energy to the cause of female education.

Own Habitation

Bethune purchased a new plot of land adjacent to that given over by Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee in Mirzapur, at the cost of ten thousand rupees. The Government of Bengal owned some land to the west of the Cornwallis Square. As Mirzapur was then deemed as outskirts of the city, Bethune preferred this place to the former as a suitable site for the school. He arranged with the Government of Bengal to have this plot in exchange of Dakshinaranjan's and his in Mirzapur.

The ceremony of laying the foundation-stone of the school-building on this new piece of land was held

[7] *General Report on Public Instruction, etc.* for 1st Oct. 1850-30th Sept. 1851, pp. xii & xiv.

on November 6, 1850. This day the East India Company's Attorney presented the title-deeds of the ground to Bethune and Dakshinaranjan and made over possession of it to them by the delivery of an Asoka tree. At Bethune's request, towards the end of the ceremony Lady Littler planted the tree in a conspicuous part of the spot intended for the school-garden. The main ceremony of laying the foundation-stone was conducted by Sir John Hunter Littler, Deputy Governor of Bengal, with the help of the Masonic Brethren just at sun-set. Sir John Hunter Littler, after laying the foundation stone, addressed the assembly in suitable terms.

The Court of Directors, as we have already said, did not think it prudent to approach Her Majesty for the appendage of her name to Bethune's school. There was one inscription on the copper-plate, and another on the silver trowel. In both these inscriptions occur the name "Hindu Female School". The following is the inscription on the copper-plate[8] deposited in the foundation-stone:

IN THE REIGN OF
HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY
VICTORIA
THE FOUNDATION STONE
OF THE
HINDU FEMALE SCHOOL
IN
CORNWALLIS SQUARE CALCUTTA
WAS LAID WITH MASONIC HONOURS
BY
MAJOR GENERAL THE HONOURABLE SIR JOHN
HUNTER LITTLER, G. C. B.
DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF BENGAL
ASSISTED BY
THE OFFICIATING DEPUTY GRAND MASTER OF BENGAL
SUPPORTED BY A NUMEROUS AND RESPECTABLE
CONVOCATION OF THE CRAFT
AND A LARGE ASSEMBLY OF THE INHABITANTS OF
CALCUTTA

On Wednesday the Sixth Day of November

A.D. MDCCCL. A.L. VDCCL.

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[8] *The Bengal Hurkaru and the India Gazette*, Nov. 8, 1850.

Wisdom exalteth her children, and layeth hold of them that seek her; he that loveth her loveth life, and they that seek to her early shall be filled with joy—Ecclesiasticus, IV,II,12.

The Inscription [9] on the Trowel, with which the mortar was laid on the copper-plate, was as follows:

PRESENTED BY
THE HONORABLE J. E. D. BETHUNE OF BALFOUR,
MEMBER OF THE SUPREME COUNCIL OF INDIA:
AND PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL OF
EDUCATION
TO
MAJOR GENERAL
THE HONORABLE SIR JOHN HUNTER LITTLER, G. C. B.
DEPUTY GOVERNOR OF BENGAL
BEING THE TROWEL USED IN LAYING
THE FOUNDATION STONE
OF THE
HINDU FEMALE SCHOOL
A. D. MDCCCL, 6th NOV.
A. L. VDCCL

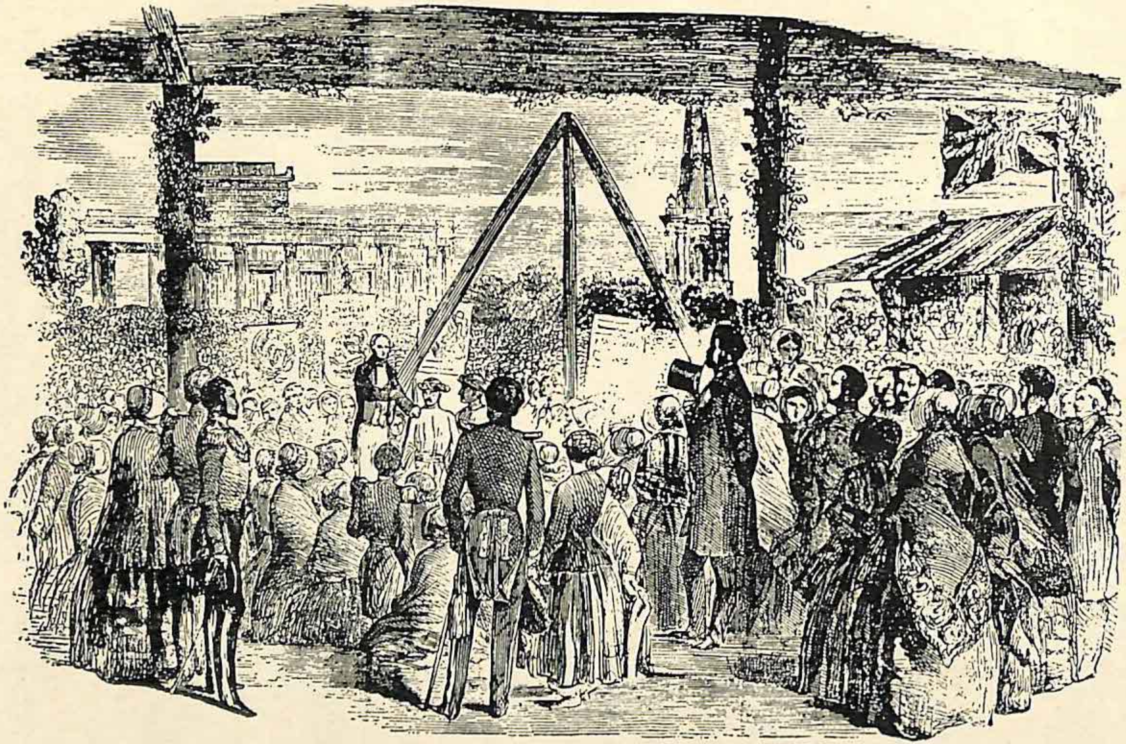
Who can find a virtuous Woman? For her price is far above rubies. She openeth her mouth with wisdom: and in her tongue is the Law of Kindness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her—Prov. XXXI, 10,26,28.

(On the Reverse)

Elevation of the Building with Masonic emblems.

Bethune's speech on the occasion was a memorable one. From the historical point of view, its importance cannot be over-estimated. It is wrongly said that the present site of the school stands on the land given by Dakshinaranjan. It has been positively proved that the present site was a governmental property and taken in exchange of that given by Dakshinaranjan in Mirzapur together with the plot purchased by Bethune himself. The main burden of Bethune's speech was concerning this transfer of property. He referred to Dakshinaranjan's liberality in very glowing terms. The following excerpts

[9] *Ibid.*



The Foundation-stone-laying Ceremony of the Bethune School-Building

from the speech are not only entertaining but illuminating, too. Addressing Sir John Littler Bethune said:

For myself and for my friend Duckinarunjun Mookerjea, I make answer before these witnesses, that we accept the gift and assurance of this land according to the form and tenure of this same deed: and further for myself I promise and undertake, in the presence of this company, that, if life and ability be granted to me, I will build upon this spot a school for the education of Hindu girls, which, with the blessings of God, I trust may be destined hereafter to produce effects worthily entitling it to have a name in the annals of the land.

It is probable, Sir, that there are many persons present who do not know that the ceremony through which we have just gone, for giving us the ownership of this land, is the most ancient and honorable form of conveyance of land known to the English law. It has been selected on this occasion not merely for that reason, not merely because of the remarkable analogy which it bears to the simple forms that have been immemorially used in Eastern countries, but also, and especially, because it has given me an opportunity of publicly associating with myself, and now enables me openly to proclaim my gratitude to the enlightened man who stands near me, to whom jointly with myself, the land has been conveyed. Duckinarunjun Mookerjea was an utter stranger to me: I had never before heard his name, when he introduced himself to me a year and a half ago, for the purpose of letting me know that he had heard of my intention of founding a female school for the benefit of his country; that he could not bear the thought that it should be said hereafter of his countrymen that they had all stood idly looking on, without offering any help in furtherance of the good work; and in short without further preface, that he was the proprietor of a piece of ground in Calcutta, valued, as I have since learned, at about twelve thousand rupees, which he placed freely and unconditionally at my disposal for the use of the school. It was a noble gift and nobly given. I subsequently was enabled to possess myself of some adjoining slips of land, until at last we became proprietors of the whole of that which by the munificent liberality of the Government of Bengal, exercised, as I was in substance told, in the letter announcing their decision expressly to testify their approval

of my design, we were permitted to exchange for this more valuable and far more eligible site on which we are now met. It is due to Duckinarunjun Mookerjea that his name should be held in perpetual remembrance in connexion with the foundation of the school.

Referring to the symbol of the Asoka tree, Bethune said:

You have seen possession of this land symbolically given, by delivery to us of a young Asoka tree, which I hope that one of the ladies present will presently do us the honour of planting in a conspicuous place, in that which is intended to become the garden of the school. The choice of this particular tree for the purpose has not been made unadvisedly or without a meaning. I am told that its Bengali name may be not unfitly paraphrased as 'The Tree of Gladness'. It is commended for this day's ceremony not only by the gracefulness of its foliage, and the surpassing beauty of its flowers, but also because it is held in especial honour among Hindu women. I understand that formerly they believed that, by eating its blossoms, they should bring a blessing on their children....I propose therefore henceforth that the Asoke tree be made the symbol of female education in India; and not only here, but by every school which has been already established in the villages round Calcutta in imitation of this, and near all those which shall hereafter be multiplied in the land, I suggest that an Asoka tree be planted, a new tree of liberty, to remind us of the bond of fellowship which unites our labour in one common cause.[10]

Further Progress

As has been already said, Bethune bore the expenses of the institution from his own pocket, amounting to between seven and eight hundred rupees per month. The cost of the school-building was estimated to be not less than forty thousand rupees. Dakshinaranjan Mukherjee and the Mukherjee brothers of Utterpara made substantial contributions to the building fund, and the rest, about thirty thousand rupees, Bethune had to bear himself.

[10] *Ibid.* Also *see* the Appendix.

In December 1850, he appointed Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar secretary to the School. We have it on the authority of Sambhu Chandra Vidyaratna, the brother-biographer of Vidyasagar, that the latter induced the respectable Hindus to send their girls here. From the same source we learn that before the proposed building was completed the Calcutta Female School was transferred to a house on the South-east corner of the College Square. This house had been previously occupied by David Hare's Pataldanga School, later known as the Hare School. We have a brief notice of the annual examination of Bethune's School, held on 18th December, 1850, in *The Bengal Hurkaru and the India Gazette* of Dec. 23, 1850. This was translated from the *Sambad Sudhangsu* of Rev. K. M. Banerjea:

> We have learnt that at the annual examination of the wards of the Calcutta Native Female School on Wednesday (18th December) Lady Gomm, Hon'ble Mrs. Lewis, and other ladies were present, and expressed themselves highly gratified with the progress of the pupils.

The girls were given prizes. The generous zeminder, Kalichandra Raychoudhury of Rangpur-Kundi, had previously donated fifty rupees to Bethune through Gourisankar Tarkabagis, Editor of *Sambad Bhaskar,* for these prizes.[11]

The work of construction proceeded smoothly. Bethune took personal care and himself supervised the work in his spare time. By the middle of 1851 it so much progressed that the matter was noticed in the Press thus:

> The friends of Native Female Education will be happy to learn that the house for the accommodation of Mr. Bethune's Female School at Cornwallis Square is making rapid progress towards completion. It has nearly attained the beam-height.

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[11] *The Bengal Hurkaru and the India Gazette,* Dec., 12, 1850.

The founder, it appears, is never at rest: he visits personally now and then with a view to dun the builder we suppose.[12]

The Calcutta Female School soon attracted to its side such influential Bengalis as Maharshi Devendra Nath Tagore and Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur as its supporters and the number of its students increased to eighty in July, 1851. We are told:

One of the most influential Natives in Calcutta, Debendranath Tagore, has added his own daughter to the long list of eighty female children already receiving instruction in this Institution, and the Raja Kali Krishna Bahadur, who occupies the most prominent position in Hindu Society in the metropolis has accepted the office of its president.[13]

Bethune's life was cut short by death on 12th August, 1851. But it was found that he had made by Will a gift of his Calcutta property worth Rs. 30.000 to the school. The relevant portion of the Will runs as follows:

I gave my carriages and horses now used at the Female School in Calcutta to the East India Company to be retained and used for the purpose of the said school. I give and devise all my interest in the lands, buildings and other property in Calcutta, now intended to be used and occupied as a Female School, to the East India Company and their successors and assignees for ever with my request that they will endow the said institution as a Female School in perpetuity, and honorably connect therewith the name of Babu Dukhinarunjun Mookerjea in honorable testimony of his great exertions in the cause.

The building was completed in September 1851 and the school was transferred there since then. Thus the first chapter of Bethune's School is closed.

[12] *Ibid*, May 2, 1851.
[13] *The Calcutta Christian Observer* for August, 1851, p. 378.

CHAPTER VIII

LORD DALHOUSIE'S INTEREST IN BETHUNE'S SCHOOL

In the previous chapter I have had occasion to mention Bethune's Letter to Lord Dalhousie and the Governor-General-in-Council's circular thereon. The circular only gave its approbation. There was no mention in it of giving any pecuniary aid by the Government either to Mr. Bethune's school or to the schools started near about Calcutta. Nevertheless Lord and Lady Dalhousie were taking unusual interest in women's education and particularly in Mr. Bethune's School. After the sudden and untimely death of Bethune, Lord Dalhousie personally undertook the charge of the school. How much he had to pay every month is evident from the following news-item published in *The Hindu Intelligencer* of February 6, 1854:

> We believe it is generally known that since Mr. Bethune's death the Governor-General has supported entirely at his own cost the Native Female School which has been about Rs. 700/- per mensem.
>
> His Lordship has signified his desire that the school may be kept open at his sole charge so long as he remains in India, his anxiety being that he might be assured that it may not fall to the ground whenever he retires from his present office.

Lord Dalhousie, or to be more exact, the Governor-General-in-Council, had already entered into correspondence with the Court of Directors on the subject. They requested the latter to adopt the school at their own charge. To this the Court readily agreed, but suggested that some fee should be immediately realised from each student of the school. The Governor-General-in-Council, while thanking the Court for their ready assent, could not, however,

agree to the proposal of levying a fee. They wrote:

> There is one point however suggested by your Court which strikes us as being of doubtful expendiency, and that the levy of a fee from the pupils generally. Fees in such cases have not been found to work badly, but where the experiment of Female Education is concerned, we would not interpose the risk of even a small fee to the successful accomplishment of the design of the benevolent founder of the institution.

We have already seen that Lord Dalhousie was all along willing to bear the burden of the school, and with his consent they further added:

> The Most Noble the Governor-General desires to add to the acknowledgements of this Government his personal and respectful thanks to your Honourable Court, but His Lordship begs permission to decline your liberality in wishing to relieve him at once from the charge of the institution. His Lordship has signified his desire to maintain the School so long as he remains in India, and he begs that arrangement may be allowed to stand.[1]

To this the Court had no reason to disagree. The movements set afoot by the establishment of Bethune's School gradually spread. The Court of Directors could not fail to take cognizance of this fact in their famous Education Despatch on 19th July, 1854. The relevant portion of the Despatch reads thus:

> The importance of female education in India cannot be over-estimated; and we have observed with pleasure the evidence which is now afforded of an increased desire on the part of many of the natives of India to give a good education to their daughters. By this means a far greater proportional impulse is imparted to the educational and moral tone of the people than by the education by men. We have already observed that schools for females are included among those to which Grants-in-aid may be given; and we cannot refrain from expressing our cordial sympathy with the efforts which are

[1] *Selections from Educational Records*, Part II, pp. 62-3.

being made in this direction. Our Governor-General-in-Council has declared, in a communication to the Government of Bengal, that the Government ought to give the native female education in India its frank and cordial support; in this we heartily concur, and we especially approve of the bestowal of marks of honor upon such native gentlemen as Rao Bahadur Maganbhai Karramchand, who devoted 20.000 rupees to the foundation of two native female schools in Ahmedabad, as by such means our desire, for the extension of female education becomes generally known.

Lord Dalhousie left India on March 6, 1856. As had been previously arranged, the Government took charge of the school after his departure. Lord Canning, successor to Lord Dalhousie, as well as Lady Canning, were much interested in its affairs. Lady Canning implored the leading men of the town to send their daughters to the school in large numbers. The Government had already placed the school under the sole charge of Sir Cecil Beadon, one of their Secretaries. In a letter to them on August 12, Beadon made some suggestions for the improvement of the school, one of which being the constitution of a strong managing committee with the leading and influential Hindus of Calcutta. On his advice the Government notified in *The Calcutta Gazette* of 20th September, 1856 the constitution of the following Committee for Mr. Bethune's School:

President—Sir Cecil Beadon; Members: Raja Kalikrishna Bahadur, Raja Pratabchandra Sinha, Rai Harachandra Ghose Bahadur, Amritalal Mitra, Ray Prannath Choudhury, Ramratna Roy, Kasiprasad Ghose; Hony. Secretary Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar.

With the constitution of the Committee the school entered into a new phase.

* * *

The Committee of the School issued a circular-letter[2] to the Hindu inhabitants of Calcutta and its neighbourhood on 24th December, 1856. In this circular-letter they emphasised the main principles to be adopted by the management in respect of admission of girls, course of studies, instructive staff, free distribution of books and free instruction. In all this the committee strictly followed the wishes of the late Mr. Bethune, founder of the School. They expressed the hope that the girls of the respectable Hindu Community would resort to the School henceforward in larger number.

The secretary, Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, in his capacity as Special Inspector of Schools, South Bengal, caused the establishment of a number of model girl schools in the districts of Hooghly, Burdwan, Midnapur and Nadia in 1857-58. Needless to add, the people of the respective localities were induced to help the cause liberally. The re-organisation of Mr. Bethune's School in Calcutta and the establishment of model girl schools under influential auspices in the mofussil gave a fillip to the cause of women's education on this side of the country.

[2] Published in Bengali in *Sambad Prabhakar*, 13th January 1857, and reproduced in full in the Appendix.



Saudamini Devi

One of the Earliest Students of Mr. Bethune's School

By Courtesy: Visva-Bharati

APPENDIX

I. QUESTIONS PROPOSED TO THE REV. KRISHNA MOHAN BANERJEA, WITH HIS ANSWERS

1. Do you not think that it is impossible to bring the greater proportion, including all the higher classes of Hindu females, to attend public Christian schools?

I do not think the respectable classes of the Hindus will at present suffer their females to attend any public school where pupils may be indiscriminately received, without consideration to caste and creed. Even if any solitary individual may feel a desire of doing so, still the tone of society, which would pronounce his conduct as ungenteel, if not impious, is likely to deter him from such a step.

2. While this is to be partly attributed to the fact that the same wordly advantages do not attend the instruction of females that are seen to follow the education of males, is it not also, in a great degree, attributable to the dislike of suffering the females to leave their own apartments?

The fact of a liberal education being, as it were, lost upon their women in the estimation of the Hindus, owing to the absence of any pecuniary advantages to be looked for the reform, will of course continue long to indispose the natives to female instruction. The alacrity with which they allow, and the importunity with which they seek, the education of their boys, are evidently based upon mercenary motives. Their desire to teach male children is the consequence of the prospect which knowledge opens of wealth and honor; and since their girls cannot enter into any sphere of active labor in the world, they do not feel any incentive towards their education. Besides this absence from their minds of a sufficient motive to this important work, there is also the presence of positive aversion to it, caused by the customs and notions which prevail among them. Although they do not forbid their girls of a tender age to appear in company, yet their marriage, which usually takes place between the years of eight and ten of their ages, generally puts an interdict upon this freedom, and it is considered disreputable for a married woman to make her appearance in public. This sentiment will for a long time baffle every effort that may be made to educate them in public.

3. Supposing the present indifference as to female education got over, would not this custom of secluding the females present an almost insurmountable barrier to their instruction in public?

The custom of secluding the females must undoubtedly prove an obstacle to public female education, inasmuch as no Hindu can suffer his wife or his grown-up daughter to be seen indiscriminately by any person without incurring the dis-

pleasure of his fraternity, and entailing much odium upon himself.

4. Do you suppose that at present, but for this custom, any considerable number of the respectable natives would permit their female relatives to be educated?

Many Hindues of respectability are, I know from personal observation, very desirous in the abstract of instructing their females. They see the palpable benefits which education has conferred upon their Western sisters, and often wish they could boast of such accomplished wives and daughters as those of their European neighbours. So that I think many would instruct the female sex, if their reputation and perhaps caste were not at stake. But as female improvement would materially increase their expense, (because they would lose to a certain extent many servants and hand-maids, if their wives and daughters were capable of higher employment, and disrelished the drudgery of the house,) I cannot say to what length their insufficient salaries may not teach them the policy of keeping their women down for fear of swelling their expense. In proportion, however, as the Government and the Europeans may breathe greater liberality of feeling towards the Hindus, and discontinue the un-Christian and inhuman practice of putting lower value upon native than upon European labour, even when both are equally useful and efficient, the cause of female emancipation must be on the advance, and keep pace with the general progress of knowledge and civilization.

5. For this purpose would they be willing to admit English ladies into their houses, their services being tendered gratuitously? *

I conceive there will be no difficulty in persuading many natives to accept the blessing of education for their women, when these shall be offered within their own doors. Few are so grossly insensible to the benefits of knowledge as not to confer them upon their daughters, if they can do so at home without any expense to themselves;—though I am not sure whether they will allow their wives to reap those advantages. In addition to the indifference which will be caused in their minds from the little hope that they will have of educating persons that have grown wild for fifteen or sixteen years, the great disadvantages under which a wife labours under her husband's roof while the elderly branches of the family are alive, must prove obstacles to the cultivation of her mind.

6. Would a European lady be secure against annoyance in going regularly at a stated hour into the house of a Native? Same as No. 10 of questions proposed to Mrs. Wilson.

* Our notions on this point have considerably changed since this was written. Education should never be gratuitous when the parents can afford to pay for it.—Ed. C.R.

If the lady referred to in this question did not go indiscriminately to any family without knowing something in the first instance concerning the character of the people into whose house she went, she could certainly be secure against annoyance. Besides, the natives have a degree of respect for European ladies, which would always deter them from any impudent or inhospitable act; and it is only in very rare and exceptionable cases that any annoyance may be experienced.

7. If a number of influential natives would give their countenance to a scheme for private education, do you think their example would materially influence the lower classes to send their daughters to schools?

Such appears to be the growing feeling in favor of female education, that I think a few examples of the kind alluded to in the question will be very extensively followed among the Hindus;—and the middling classes will then gradually wax bold, and venture to send their girls to school. The lower classes (that is, those who are not much under the bonds which society imposes, and whose poverty and degradation render them invulnerable so far as infamy is concerned), are in the habit even now of sending girls to school upon the presentation of sufficient motives, such as a few pice or other bakshis being occasionally given to the children.

8. State whether you know of any instances in which domestic education has been tried, whether the experiments have been made under favourable circumstances, and what have been the result?

I remember one or two of my own acquaintances, who had successfully conducted the education of their wives in the Bengali language by teaching them privately in the night. I know also the case of one nearly related to me, who failed in a similar endeavour. The circumstances under which such attempts were made were by no means favourable or auspicious. While the other women in the family railed at every idea of education, the wife of an enlightened husband could scarcely venture to act according to his better advice; and therefore the success in the two cases above-mentioned was extraordinary, but the failure in the other instance was natural. I know that many are deterred from attempting to teach their wives privately from the little prospect of success that is before them. The case of a lady visiting and instructing in the day, with permission from the master of the house, would be different from those that I have just adverted to, since the respect which such a lady will command must protect the learner from the scoffs of her friends, at least for several hours in the day.

9. How many females do you suppose may be on an average in one dwelling?

The number of females in each family is on the average about six or eight, including grown-up and elderly women.

10. State in general what would be your views regarding a plan for sending a number of well-qualified female teachers from Europe for the purpose of teaching native females in their own houses.

I should think if a number of well-qualified European females could be procured for the purpose of instructing the Hindu women in their own houses, they would succeed under God in doing a very great work. The tutoresses, however, would have to undergo a deal of fatigue, and put up with many inconveniences, owing to the diversity of habits and manners between the Europeans and the natives.

11. Favour me with any other remarks that may occur to you on the subject in general.

No experiment of the kind having ever been tried in this country, it is undoubtedly the duty of European Christians not to leave it untried, and to offer knowledge and instruction in the very houses of their heathen sisters, since they will not be persuaded to come out of doors. The only difficulty appears to be on the score of expense; but considering how much the European community is indebted to this country, whence they are drawing so much of gold and silver, and where they exercise as it were a lordly supremacy, I have no hesitation in saying that they owe it to the natives, even upon moral considerations, to instruct and enlighten their sons and daughters; and as in other efforts, so in this, of educating Hindu females, every civil and military officer, every merchant and tradesman, in short, every individual that has found his residence in India a source of temporal profit and earthly aggrandizement, ought to give from a sense of duty whatever aid and encouragement he can.

12. If convenient, talk over the subject with some of your Hindu friends, and detail to me their sentiments on the subject, particularzing how far you suppose, from your knowledge of the native character, that they will be prepared to act up to the sentiments which they may express to a Christian minister.

I have often had occasion to talk on the subject with several Hindu friends, and they seemed mostly anxious to improve the minds of their females. But not being in possession of any feasible plan whereby to attain their object, and being restricted by prevalent custom from sending women out of doors, they generally give up the idea of their education as chimerical and fanciful. But I am decidedly of opinion, that a goodly number would gladly accept the services of a lady, if they could get them free of charge within their doors.*

* *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, March 1840.

II. RADHAKANT DEB ON WOMEN'S EDUCATION

The name of Raja Radhakant Deb is associated with many beneficent activities of the early nineteenth century. He was also a pioneer of women's education. He started female *pathsala* or primary school in his own house. In those days periodical examinations of the Calcutta School Society's boys were held in Radhakant Deb's house. Girl students of private as well as missionary schools were examined along with these boys and prizes were distributed to the deserving. Raja Radhakant assisted materially Pandit Gourmohan Vidyalankar in the preparation of *Stri Sikshavidhayaka*, a treatise on women's education in India, for popularising the cause among his countrymen at that time. Just after the foundation of the Bethune school, the fore-runner of the Bethune College, at Calcutta, some correspondence passed between the Hon'ble J. E. Drinkwater Bethune, the principal founder of the School and Raja Radhakant Deb. I have come across MS. copies of the letters written by Radhakant to Bethune from which the former's views and activities in this direction can be clearly ascertained. Raja Radhakant Deb wrote to say that the orthodox elements of the society represented by him were no less keen to impart education to their women-folk than the progressives of his day. Only the former differed in this that in their opinion time had not then arrived to allow their female wards to join *public* schools. Mr. Bethune got *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* published afresh and in this, too, he received the Raja's blessings. These letters are still of much interest to the students of Indian education, and I reproduce them below. The first letter refers to the publication of *Stri Sikshavidhayaka*.

(I)

The Hon'ble J. E. Drinkwater Bethune, Esqre.

My dear Sir,

I have been honored with your favor of this day and beg to state in reply that before I allow myself to appear in public as the author of the *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* I should like to see the new edition of it which is about to be published under your auspices. I, therefore, ask the favor of your kindly sending me a copy of it when issued from the Press that I may examine its contents. As I have a great mind to hold conversation with you on the subject I shall feel obliged by your kindly letting me know when it will be convenient for you to see me at yours. Begging your acceptance of my best thanks

for your kindness towards my nephew, I remain with esteem and regard,

Yours faithfully and obediently,
R.
[Raja Radhakant Deb.]

19th February, 1851.

In the second letter Raja Radhakant condemned the vituperators of Mr. Bethune and supported the cause he represented in no uncertain terms.

(II)

To

The Hon'ble J. E. D. Bethune, Esqre.

My dear Sir,

I shall do myself the honor of waiting on you at Sir Arthur Buller's on Saturday to come between the hours of one and two p.m. as my religious duties and other vocations will not, I regret, permit me to visit you in the forenoon. My literary occupations leave me little or no time to look over the newspapers but I have learnt from Mr. Blaquire's communication that impudent publications are appearing therein to sully your reputation. They are certainly the vituperation of a malignant mind that cannot rest without doing evil.

20th February, 1851.

I remain,
Faithfully and obediently yours,
R.

The third letter is the longest. Herein Raja Radhakant Deb gave a *resumé* of his activities in the cause of women's education for more than a quarter of a century. His views on various aspects of women's education, too, will be found in it.

(III)

To

The Hon'ble J. E. Drinkwater Bethune, Esqre.

My dear Sir,

On perusing the new edition of the *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* which you lent me the other day I find that the first of it containing Dialogues between two Native females on a vulgar colloquial style is comparatively a modern addition made I believe by Gourmohan Vidyalankara, the late Pandit of the School Society, in some of the subsequent editions of the work—the second part is an exhortation to the Hindoo females by English ladies to enlighten their minds with education. It was also I think composed by the said Pandit. But most of the materials were supplied by me, especially the instance of some Sanscrit Texts on behalf of female education and the

examples of educated women both ancient and modern. To this extent I have a share in the execution of the work and no further. I cannot therefore conscientiously take upon myself the credit of an author.

That the work cannot be fathered on me will appear from the following remarks I made on it when it was circulated to me as a member of the School-Book Society:

"I highly approve of the design of the work on the Hindoo female education in the manner proposed by me in my letters to Mr. Pearce and strongly recommend the republication of the work in the languages suggested by that gentleman, etc. This pamphlet being composed from the best Hindoo authorities would be both gratifying and encouraging to the Natives who peruse it to promote the important object in view. The revision which the work requires I have communicated to the *author* who I think deserves the proposed remuneration etc".

I may mention here that the first edition of the work was published in 1822 at the Baptist Mission Press for the Female Juvenile Society and its style having undergone material changes in subsequent editions has lost its terseness and classical purity.

To prevent any misconception of my individual opinion respecting the great cause you have been struggling for, I embrace this opportunity to declare that I have even shewn myself both by precept and example a staunch advocate of female education in abstract the importance of which in improving the morals and promoting the social happiness of a nation is too obvious to need any illustration.

The Indigenous schools or *Pathsalas* in Calcutta which flourished under the patronage of the late School Society numbered among the scholars many an intelligent girl who received their instruction at the domicile of their father or neighbours, were examined by the Pandits and other officers deputed by the Society and the distribution of prizes used to be held at my residence. I myself was the Native Secretary to the Society and had the supreme gratification of witnessing the admirable working of the system. Not a stigma was attached to it nor a voice of censure was raised against it. I sincerely wish that such a system may be restored.

Efforts indeed were made as early as in the days of Marquis Hastings to set up public female schools but since then all classes of respectable Hindoos have thought it derogatory to allow their daughters and female wards to attend these institutions. In my letter addressed to the Rev. W. H. Pearce in 1819 I find the following lines:

"We get our girls taught in Bengalee before they are married though all natives do not do so. I fear the schoolmasters will scarcely have any girls of opulent and respectable Natives to be instructed at their schools."

Again in the year 1821 when the British and Foreign

School Society sent out Miss Cook to educate Hindoo females the same aversion for the instruction of females at public schools prevailed and I communicated to the above gentleman the sentiments of the Hindoo Community on the subject in the following terms:

"They may be all convinced of the utility of getting their female children taught at home in Bengalee by their domestic school-masters as some families do before such female children are married or arrived at the age 9 or 10 years at furthest. For these reasons I am publicly of opinion that we need not have a meeting to discuss the subject of the education of Hindoo females by Miss Cook who may render her services (if required) to the schools lately established by the missionaries for the tuition of the poorer classes of native females."

In another letter to the said gentleman I said:

"The Hindoos cannot but feel themselves grateful if her (Miss Cook's) laudable intentions to teach the Hindoo ladies in European works of art both manual and mechanical prevail upon her to instruct for the present some poor women of good caste that when these have acquired a degree of skilfulness under her benevolent instructions they may hereafter be retained in the families of respectable Hindoos and their knowledge will thereby be diffused among native females generally without interfering with their immemorial customs and usages."

Thus it appears that the antipathy of the respectable classes of natives against the establishment of public female schools is not a novel one nor does it originate from any malicious disposition towards the worthy founders. In fact I would say that the sudden eggression from the close seclusion of hundreds of years in which Hindoo females of the higher classes have been kept, however reprehensible it may be or from whatever source it might have originated, cannot but lead to great abuses.

It is therefore my humble opinion that the proprietors of public female schools would do well to take into their Institutions Hindoo girls of the *Nava Sayaka* class * which does not stand very low in the scale of Society, and encourage by some such system as that of the School Society the establishment of Indigenous female schools which will be supplied with teachers from those public schools.

20th March, 1851.

I remain with esteem and regard
Yours faithfully and obediently
R.

P.S.—With many thanks I beg to return herewith the copy of the *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* with the title page which you lent me the other day.
20th March, 1851.

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* It comprehends nine inferior classes. *viz*: Gopa (the cowherd), Mali (the gardener), Taili (the oilman), Tanti (weaver), Modaka (confectioner), Varaji (the cultivator of the Bettle plant), Kulala (the potter), Karmakara (the black-smith) and Napita (the Barber).

III. BETHUNE'S LETTER TO LORD DALHOUSIE

My Lord,

It is known to your Lordship that in the month of May last year I established a Native Female School in Calcutta. I explained to your Lordship at that time my reasons for making this experiment on my own responsibility and was honoured by your approval of the course I adopted. I considered that my station in the Council of India and as President of the Council of Education afforded me peculiar advantages in endeavouring to discover whether my belief was well founded that the time has come when this important step in the system of education of the Natives can be taken with a reasonable hope of success. I wished the discredit of failure to rest with myself alone, if my expectation had proved abortive, and that the credit of the Government should not be pledged to the measure until its success was assured.

The failure of every attempt to induce respectable Natives to send their daughters to a Missionary School, and the conviction which I have that the system of the Government Schools is best calculated for producing a rapid and salutary effect in the country induced me to establish my School on the same principle of excluding from it all religious teaching, though I was well aware of the additional difficulty which this restriction would cause to me for procuring efficient female teachers. English was to be taught to those only whose parents wished it, all were to be instructed in Bengali and in plain and fancy work.

Great excitement was caused, as I expected, by the opening of my school which at first numbered only 21 pupils, and it was vehemently opposed by many of the most influential natives of Calcutta, chiefly however as I believe on the ground of mortified vanity because they had not been consulted in the matter. I had refrained from doing so, after carefully weighing all the arguments for and against that course. On the other hand I was not left without encouragement by those who were favourable to my plan.

The three Natives to whom I desire specially to record my gratitude for their assistance are Baboo Ram Gopal Ghose, the well-known merchant who was my principal adviser in the first instance and who procured me my first pupils, Baboo Duckinarunjun Mookerjea, a Zemindar, who was previously unknown to me, but who as soon as my design was published, introduced himself to me for the purpose of offering me the free gift of a site for the school, or five beegahs of land valued at 10,000 Rupees in the Native quarter of the town and Pundit Madun Mohun Turkalunkar, one of the pundits of the Sanscrit College, who not only sent two daughters to the school, but has continued to attend it daily, to give gratuitous instruction

to the children in Bengali, and has employed his leisure time in the compilation of a series of elementary Bengali Books expressly for their use. Every kind of annoyance and persecution was set on foot to deter my friends from continuing to support the school and with such success that at one time the number of enrolled pupils dwindled to seven, and on some occasion not more than three or four were present in the school. At this time the question was agitated whether or not I should offer stipends to the girls who attended, as was done on the first establishment of some of the Government Colleges and I was assured that if I would offer 5 or 6 rupees a month to each, I might count on immediately recruiting the School to any extent that I might think desirable from Brahminical families of unquestioned caste and respectability. I considered however that by administering an artificial stimulus of this kind, I should not bring fairly to the test what I was anxious to ascertain whether any real desire for the education of their daughters exists in any respectable class of the community, and I decided against it. The only allowances which I have made have been for carriage hire for those who required it and occasional presents of dresses, when any of the little girls appeared in rather too primitive a state to correspond with my notions of decency. Lately I have had a carriage built expressly for the use of the school which holds twelve children, and shall probably soon require another. We continued to keep the school open, in the face of the discouraging defection which I have mentioned, and one of our chief opponents having died, it began to revive, until the number rose to 34. On the first day that Lady Dalhousie was expected to visit the school 30 children were present and 25 on the day on which her visit was actually made.

The eagerness of the children to learn, and their docility and quickness correspond fully with what we have seen of the Bengali boys, and in the judgment of their intelligent teachers far surpass what is found among European girls of the same age. Meanwhile I was gratified by learning that the example I had set found imitation by the Natives themselves, in different parts of the country. Just about the time of the opening of my school, Baboo Joykissen Mookerjea, a Zeminder of the Hooghly District, addressed the Council of Education on a plan which he proposed for opening a female school at Ooterparah of which he professed himself ready to pay half the expenses if the Government would give it sanction to the undertaking and defray the remainder. Under my advice the Council returned a dilatory answer to this application, intimating that it would be desirable to witness the success of my experiment before the Government engaged directly in the business. On my late visit to Ooterparah, I learned that Joykissen Mookerjea is preparing to open the school at once without any further application to Government.

At Baraset some of the most respectable inhabitants have already established one, now attended by more than 20 girls, chiefly Brahminical caste, and what is very remarkable, two of them being already married.

The earnestness and good feeling with which they have undertaken this work was shewn by their replying to me, when I offered to bear the expense of building a school house for them, that they would apply to me in case of need, but they hoped to raise a sufficient subscription among themselves, which I understand they have since done. Similar schools have been set on foot at *Neebudhia* and *Sooksagur* with the particulars of which I am less acquainted, and the day before yesterday I was informed of *another near Jessore*. In addition to these proofs of the interest which the people are beginning to take in this matter, I may mention that on occasion of my visiting the Government Vernacular school at Chota Jagooleah in the Baraset district, I found that the Native Managers had given among other prizes, a silver Medal for the best Bengali Essay on the benefits to be expected from Female Education. It must not be supposed that this movement is made without opposition on the part of those of the contrary opinion. On the contrary wherever a school has been established, there has been a repetition of the same system of persecution and attempts at intimidation which we have had to contend with in Calcutta, and frequent applications are made to me for support and encouragement, as the position I have assumed naturally marks me out as the patron of all such undertakings. I am of opinion that the time is come when all that is needed to secure their complete success is a declaration on the part of Government that it looks on them with a favourable eye. It may seem incredible after all that the Government has done in the cause of education that such a declaration should be thought necessary in order to convince the people of this fact, but among the shameless expedients to which the opponents of female education have resorted to has been an unblushing assertion that the Government is not merely indifferent but actually hostile to it. I am convinced that the bold misrepresentation will not be without its effect, if some encouragement is not given to those who have put themselves forward in advancing this great work, otherwise I could have wished, in order to demonstrate more unquestionably the success of my experiment, to have continued for some time longer without endeavouring to enlist the influence of Government on the side of the schools, but I am already in a condition to assure your Lordship that the step I recommend may be taken with full confidence of carrying with it the sympathies of a great body of the people, and I believe that discouragement may follow, if it is not taken forthwith. No opposition to the declared wishes of Government is to be apprehended. The feeling

excited has never been, even at the worst, so violent as on occasion of the establishment of the Medical College, and the good to be expected from the full development of the scheme cannot be surpassed by that of any institution in the country. I wish to recommend that the Council of Education be informed by your Lordship in Council that it is henceforward to consider its functions as comprising also the superintendence of Native female education, and that wherever any disposition is shewn by the Natives to establish female Schools, it is to give them all possible encouragement and further their plans in every way that is not inconsistent with the efficiency of the institutions already under their management. If your Lordship in Council shall be of opinion that this course may be taken with propriety, it may be right to suggest also to the Government of Bengal that special instructions should be issued to the Magistrates calling their attention to the growing disposition among the Natives to institute female schools, and to the annoyances and persecutions by which in some cases endeavours have been made to stifle them, directing them to use all means in their power to make it known that the Government views the establishment of such schools with great satisfaction to encourage their promoters in all proper ways, and specially to intimate to those whom they shall learn to be active in opposing them that, while the Government does not desire forcibly to impose any such institutions on the people in opposition to their own wishes, it will not overlook any attempt to illtreat or intimidate those who are engaged in furthering a work which the Government considers so beneficial.

With respect to my own school I have no other wish than to continue to defray the expense of it as I have hitherto done, so long as I remain in this country, and when I leave it, I have little doubt of being able to interest others to supply my place: but it would give me great satisfaction, and would I think show the interest taken by the Government in this movement in a marked and appropriate manner, if I could obtain your Lordship's influence with the Honourable Court of Directors in inducing them to address Her Majesty for leave to call the School by Her name and to consider it as placed especially under Her patronage. It will not be one of the least remarkable triumphs in India which will have redounded to the honor of Her Majesty's reign, that in the time of a female Sovereign a beginning should be made toward emancipating so many of Her female subjects from the degradation and misery which are now their lot. I venture therefore to make this request, in the confident hope that it will meet your Lordship's approval, and with the firm belief that those inhabitants of this country who are sufficiently enlightened to perceive the benefits they derive from their present form of Government

will see therein one more proof of the earnest desire of those to whom the destinies of their country are committed to further its prosperity and happiness.

Calcutta
The 29th March, 1850

I have the honour to be, &c.,
(Signed.) J. E. D. Bethune*

IV. OPENING OF THE CALCUTTA FEMALE SCHOOL

Mr. Bethune's Speech, May 7, 1849

My friends,—I understand that it is expected of me that I should address a few words to you on the occasion on which we are met here. This is a day of no common gladness and triumph to all of us: to you as fathers, because it is impossible that these feelings of natural affection which form the better part of every man deserving the name should not lead you to rejoice in the hope which this new institution holds out for the improvement of those who are most dear to you: to me, because it is an unspeakable gratification that I have been privileged to become an instrument in furthering this great work; and, although the blessings of a wife and children are not mine, yet I can feel something of a father's joy, in the consciousness that I have done something towards heightening and ennobling that joy in those friends whom I see around me, and I trust also, in multitudes of others, who will not be slow to follow your example.

The scheme which is developed here to-day has not been lightly conceived or hastily undertaken by me. Among the decuments which were earliest put into my hands connected with this country, even before I left England, were the reports of the progress of education, and the proof of the proficiency of the students in the government institutions of which I am now the official head. These reports led me irresistibly to the conclusion that in a country in which the youngmen had been subjected to this system of training, now for more than thirty years, it was highly probable that the day could not be far distant, when an imperative call would be made for extending the benefits of education by which the youngmen of Bengal had so largely profited, to the other half of its inhabitants. I believed that you, having felt in your own person that elevating influence of a good education, would before long begin to feel the want of companions, the cultivation of whose taste and intellect might correspond in some degree to your own; that you would gradually begin to understand how infinitely the happiness of domestic life may be enhanced by the charm which can be thrown over it by the graceful virtues and elegant accomplishments of well educated women; that you

* *Selections from Educational Records,* Part II, 1840-59, pp. 55-6.

would be led to the reflection, in your study of the history of other nations, that in the degree of estimation in which females are held, the amount of mental culture to which they attain, and the extent of influence which they are permitted to exercise over the tastes and habits of society, the best and surest test may be found of the degree in which one nation surpasses another in civilization.

I thought too, that you could not fail to discover, as soon as you began to reflect at all upon the matter, how infinite is the importance of the part which every mother has to perform in the education of her offspring. When the young child is first struggling to the use of his reason, when with every hour, new sights, new experiences, new ideas are crowding in multitudes upon his infant mind, of what vast consequence is it that from his mother, to whose personal care he is necessarily entrusted, by whom alone his physical wants can be supplied, he should also be able to draw that healthful food for his reason, his taste, his imagination, which may train and educate him to grow up to a great and good man. What wonder then, that the character of a nation would depend so intimately on the character of its women. And this is not felt in childhood alone, but in every relation of life the power of female imfluence is acknowledged; and the importance cannot be too highly estimated of doing all in our power to secure that this influence shall always be exerted in the direction which points to justice, to virtue and to honour.

These were the ideas which occupied my thought even before I landed on an Indian shore, and since my arrival here, everything which I was able to learn or observe confirmed me in their correctness and that similar ideas were repidly working their way in Bengal. I heard of men educating their wives, their daughters, their sisters. True, these were individual instances; and in some cases it was done privately, and as it were by stealth, for it is indeed no light matter to run counter to the preconceived opinions of a whole people in any land, and especially in this country, where you are supposed to cling with peculiar fondness to your old institutions. But all these indications of a new way of thinking on this subject were symptomatic and encouraging.

Further, it was a hopeful reflection that the seclusion and the ignorance to which your females have been so long condemned do not belong to the oldest customs of your nation, that they are themselves innovations, brought in, as I believe, by a courtly imitation of your Mahammedan invaders. I find in the translation of your old works of imagination and legends that the daughters of your sages and wives of your princes are described as enjoying a degree of personal freedom and as adorned with learning and accomplishments, from which their successors have been long systematically debarred. I do

not know what degree of credit belongs to the story of Lilavati, whether in fact such a person ever existed, or whether the learned treatise connected with her name were really either written by her or compiled for her use; but of this I am certain that, if they be not authentic, the compiler of them would never have invented the story which attributes them to her, if at that time the education of women, even in the abstrusest science had seemed a thing incongrous or impossible.

It was reasonable then to hope that you would gladly welcome the proposal to put an end to the barbarous state of degradation of the female sex, which did not characterise the earliest and most flourishing period of Hindu history.

Notwithstanding these reasons for hoping that my design would succeed, I felt that it was an important venture, not to be lightly made; and that in proportion as the chances seemed to favour success, would be the greatness of the discouragement if the attempt should be openly made and as openly fail. In seeking to advance the cause of female education in India, or in other words the elevation and improvement of the whole people, one false step, one hasty or ill-considered measure might incalculately injure and retard it. I determined, therefore, that a year at least should elapse, during which I might learn to see my way and strengthen my ground of operations, before I would make any decided step in advance. I landed in April 1848 and in April 1849, I opened my scheme in detail to some of the friends by whom I am now surrounded having first secured the promise of the valuable assistance of the lady who is about to take charge of your children.

It was not without full consideration that I decided on making this attempt, without seeking in the first instance to connect it directly and officially with the Government. Something was lost but much, as it seemed to me, was to be gained by the course I decided on pursuing. I considered it essential to success that the execution of the plan should follow with as little delay as possible on the first public intimation of it, and that there should be no reserves, no hesitation, nothing in short to check the ardour of those who might be ready to embark with me in the cause.

It was impossible to overlook that, before I could hope to establish this as a Government institution in a matter of such deep importance to the welfare of the country, there must be consultations and debates, and, perhaps, even references to the authorities at home. I must have surrendered something of my free power of action, and especially delays would have intervened, which of all things, I most deprecated. I must have been prepared too to show to the Government assured means of success, before they could be asked to sanction the novel measure, and out of all this I foresaw inconveniences and difficulties arising which in my mind more than counter-

balanced the obvious advantages of such connection. On the other hand, my position in this country and my official career as head of the Government Schools afford of itself a strong guarantee to my supporters of the respectability of any school which should be established under my personal auspices and held out some hope of its permanence.

I trusted also, and as the result has shown, in a happy hour, to exciting among you some degree of enthusiasm, by announcing that I was willing to take on myself all the responsibilities of establishing and maintaining the school, and that I threw myself confidently on the enlightened natives of Calcutta to appreciate my motives, and assured of their adhesion to my views. I cannot express myself in terms of sufficient thankfulness to you for the noble manner in which you have responded to this appeal.

There was another point which I had to consider well and warily, the consideration of which, however, in some of its bearings was partly connected with those to which I have just alluded. It was of course essential to great and permanent success that all the pupils of my new school should belong to families of respectability; but the question which offered itself to me was, whether should I or should I not seek the support, in the first instance, of those who are generally looked on as the leading men of Hindu Society. I speak of such men as Rajah Radhakant Deb, Rajah Kalikrishna, Ashutosh Deb, and my colleagues in the management of the Hindu College, Prosunno Coomar Tagore, and Russomoy Dutt. I had reason to believe that several of these gentlemen would not be unfavourable to the proposition of female education, nevertheless, after much and anxious thought, I decided that it would be on the whole most advisable to seek my first pupils from the families of the immediate friends of those with whom I was in habits of more frequent intercourses.

I considered that it would be open to those heads of Hindu Society to express an expectation that any institution which they agreed to sanction should have also the formal sanction of Government and this would have landed me again among those delays from which I was anxious to escape. I reflected also that many who were able to bear the expences of giving private instruction to the females of their family at home might express a preference for that method of education; and, if the circumstances of this country were different from what they are, there is much in the arguments which they would probably urge on that score in which I should agree with them; and it would have cost me much time and argument to point out to them that as a general system of domestic education is and for a long time must be impossible in Bengal, from the mere want of proper instructresses, it is incumbent on those who really wish to serve their country efficiently effectually to sacrifice something of their

own wishes, and by their example to encourage and stimulate others in less fortunate circumstances. I thought it likely, too, that these men, feeling the responsibility of their stations, might choose to consult upon the matter with their own friends, and thus my plans would have been canvassed and debated in societies and by bodies to which I had no access, and where I could offer no explanations, and exert no influence. But it is my fixed intention, if it has your approval, as I can scarcely doubt that it will, as soon as we have settled down into something of method and order, to invite these gentlemen to witness what we are doing, and to call on them to give an additional impulse to our exertions by their avowed sanction and support. I know the question has been debated among you whether it would not have been a proper compliment to have asked them and others of the same character to be present on this occasion. I trust that some opportunity may be found of explaining to them that this has not been done, not from want of any personal respect, but in accordance with the system on which it was thought best that the experiment should be made. In the like manner, I have been asked by several of my European friends who have already heard of this design and who are looking toward it with the deepest sympathy, whether they could be allowed to be present this morning I needed but have expressed a wish, and I know that this room could have been crowded with ladies, the leaders of the European Society of Calcutta. But I declined this on similar grounds. I thought that this would have given an official formality which did not properly belong to the inauguration of that which strictly is still only a private institution. The time may come, and that at no distant period, when all reserve of this kind may be laid aside when the Calcutta Female School, by whatever other and more illustrious name it may then be known, shall take its proud place among the most honoured, as it will assuredly be one of the most useful institutions of the land.

I ought not to conclude without saying one word on the nature of the studies that are to be pursued here. It is well understood by you all that the plan which has been uniformly followed in the Government Schools, of not meddling with the religion of your children, is to be strictly followed here. There are some, I know, who are very apt to sneer at the notion of learned females, and they may form an idea of the sort of education which we propose to give to these girls, which I think it very likely that I should be ready to join with them in ridiculing. But if any of you have done me the honour to attend to the remarks which I have had occasions to make in connexion with the education of the boys of Bengal, you will see how constantly I have dwelt on the importance of seduously cultivating their mother tongue, that I had told them that we resort to English, chiefly on account of the superiority of its literature,

and that we expect of our students that sooner or later they will impart to countrymen in their own language the knowledge which they have gained in ours. Judge then whether their opinions are not likely to be applied by me with ten-fold force to the education of girls, who are not called on to be the instructors of others except in the bosom of their own families. As far as literature therefore is concerned, we shall make Bengali the foundation, and resort to English only for some of those subsidiary advantages, and when we know that the communication of such knowledge is not in opposition to the wishes of the parents. Besides which, there are a thousand feminine works and accomplishments, with their needles, in embroidery and fancy work in drawing, in many other things which I am not half so competent to describe as my friend Mrs. Ridsdale, whose province it will be to teach them. The knowledge of these things will give to your children the means of adorning their own homes, and of supplying themselves with harmless and elegant employment. It was said long ago that "Idleness is the mother of all vice": but there is very little idleness in the world; and when any one is not engaged in some harmless or useful occupation, it is generally because he is employed about something worse.

It would have been great forgetfulness if I had closed these remarks without mentioning in terms of well merited praise a fact which may be known to some of you, but probably is not so to all, a fact which of itself has acted upon me as an additional stimulus to follow out my own plan. At this moment that I speak to you, a formal plan has been submitted to the Council of Education, with a request that it be laid before Government, by Baboo Joykissen Mookerjee, for the establishment of a Native Female School at Ooterparah, which he proposes to have endowed at the joint expence of himself and of the Government, what may be the result of his application, I cannot now foretell: you see that it involves the same considerations which I had to anticipate in my own case, with the additional circumstance that, if the Government be favourable to the plan, it is probable that they may wish the first experiment made under their sanction to be in Calcutta rather than in an adjoining village; but I am sure that it reflects great honour on Joykissen, and furnishes one more proof of the spirit which is awake in the land. I observe, too, in the last advices that we have from Madras, that the Advocate General alludes to a female school which has been actually established in that Presidency by two native students of the Government School there. I have written to Madras to learn further particulars, and to ask the names of these youngmen, that I may lose no time in assuring them of my sympathy, and of any assistance in my power to give them.

There remains but one thing more to be mentioned. It was agreed at my house the other night that two Committees should

be appointed, one to look out for a proper place for the school house, and the other to examine and decide upon the application of candidates for admission into the school. Only the former of these was appointed, and their duties have been superseded, at least for the present, by the liberal kindness of Baboo Duckinarunjun Mookerjea who has placed these premises at our disposal. There is a pressing want for the other Committee, and if it meets your approval, I should propose that for the next six months those who were chosen of the House Committee should act temporarily as the Committee of selection. Fresh applicants are constantly coming in, and it is necessary that I should know to whom they are to be referred. The question is no longer doubtful, it is not now that we are to say 'shall we succeed?' We have succeeded: and the banner which we plant this day, with the blessing of God, shall never go backwards, until its supremacy is felt and thankfully acknowledged in every part of the land.

Finally, I take this opportunity of reminding you that I shall request you from time to time to assemble at my house, in order that I may know by direct communication with you, whether the school is conducted to your satisfaction, whether there are any particulars which you wish to have altered, and in short, to strengthen still more and more the assurance which I know you have at this moment of my anxious desire that it should be conducted in all respects in such manner as to be satisfactory to you and beneficial to your children.*

V. CALCUTTA FEMALE SCHOOL

The Foundation-stone-laying Ceremony of Its New Building

The ceremony was conducted by the Deputy Governor (a high mason), assisted by the officiating Grand Master and his officers and members of private lodges as could conveniently attend.

Sir John Littler first arrived, and, shortly afterwards, the masonic body marched from the General Assembly's Institution to the site of the intended building. Having arrived within a proper distance of the spot, the procession halted, the Brethren opened to the right and the left, and faced inwards, so as to leave room for the officiating Grand Master, preceded by his standard and sword-bearer, to pass up the centre, followed by the rest in succession so as to invert the order of procession. When the Grand Master arrived, he received the plans of the building from the builder, Mr. Gray, and presented them to Sir

* *The Bengal Hurkaru and the India Gazette*, 8th May, 1849.

John Littler, and the rest of the company for their inspection. The inscription on the (copper) plate was then read by the Grand Master, who then requested Sir John Littler to descend from the platform, in order to assist at the ceremony, presenting him at the same time with the silver trowel made for the occasion. The Grand Treasurer then placed two bottles containing coins and records of the present reign, in holes prepared for them in the lower part of the stone. The plate was then laid on its bed by Sir John Littler and the cement applied, and the upper stone was then let down slowly (solemn music playing). The Grand Master then proved the stone by the aquare, level, and plump rule which were successively handed to him by the Grand Wardens, after which the Grand Master said: 'May the Grand Architect of the Universe bless this foundation-stone which we have laid, and may we be enabled by His Providence to perfect this and other virtuous undertakings'. The cornucopia and cup of wine and oil were then handed to the Grand Master as before the bounteous Author of all good bless this city with the abundance of corn wine and oil, and with all other necessaries and comforts of life.

The Deputy Governor then re-ascended the platform, and the Grand Master addressed the assembly as follows:

"Sir John Littler—My Lord Bishop—and Ladies and Gentlemen,—It is customary, when Free masons assist in laying the foundation stone of any edifice, for the officiating Grand Master to deliver before the assembly present, a brief address appropriate to the occasion. Owing to accidental circumstances, the duty of addressing you, as well as of taking this active and prominent part in laying the foundation-stone of the present intended of edifice, has devolved on me. I much regret that this is the case, for your sake as well as mine, because there are many persons, both within and without the pale of masonry, who are infinitely more competent than myself to do justice to such an occasion as this; and whose eloquence and command of language, added to their experience, would have enabled them to afford you gratification and pleasure, in a manner immeasurably superior to anything, which my poor and untried abilities can offer.

You are aware that the Freemasons, from time immemorial, have assisted at the ceremony of laying the foundation stones of public buildings. I need only refer (as an instance of remote date) to the circumstance of the stone of St. Paul's Cathedral, in London, being laid by the reigning Sovereign of the day, assisted by the Grand Master Rivers, and his deputy (the celebrated architect, Sir Christopher Wren), and (as a modern instance) I may mention that the foundation stone of the National Gallery at Edinburgh was laid in August last, by Prince Albert, assisted by the Duke of Bacclengh with Masonic honors. The Freemasons of Bengal have also been instrumental

in laying the foundation stones of many edifices in Calcutta; for instance, the Metcalfe Hall, The Fever Hospital, the Medical College, the Alms House, the Hindoo College and many other edifices, and now, they have been requested to lend similar aid, with reference to this projected Institution, for the instruction of Hindoo females. On these occasions certain significant ceremonials are always applied. The square level, and plumbrule (with which you observed me from this stone) are emblems of certain cardinal virtues in masonry; the corn, wine, and oil are eloquent types of the goodness of an Allwise Creator; and we poured forth the corn, wine, and oil not in mere pageantry or empty mummery, but in a spirit of deep thankfulness, for the bounties received in time past from the Great Architect of the Universe, and in fervent but humble hope, of a continuance of those blessings in time to come.

You have learnt from the reading of the inscription plate, the purposes and object of this Institution. I shall not pause to enquire minutely into the subject itself, or the system which is intended to be adopted with reference to education. The Hon'ble Member of Council, who takes so great an interest personally in the matter, will, if necessary, explain presently his views on the subject, and the peculiar objects proposed to be carried out. It is a maxim maintained by Freemasons, that no man can, without the advantages of education, reach a high position in Society; and as they are ever ready to lend their support and assistance to any undertaking, which has for its object the improvement and instruction of their fellow creatures they have not hesitated to appear to day. Indeed when I look round me and perceive so much of what is eminent in rank and station, as well as in beauty, accomplishment, and intellectuality, of this British Metropolis in the East, I am induced to suppose, that you too, have come here (not from motives of curiosity) by your presence to indicate approval of this benevolent attempt to ameliorate the condition of the females of this country.

Let me recall your memory and attention to the history of different nations, both ancient and modern,—of the Egyptians, of the Jewish nation, of Greece, (whose fame in literature has survived, not centuries, but thousands of years,) of Rome; and then rapidly glance at the States of Modern Europe, not forgetting our own native island;—you will find, that each nation has been at the pinnacle of her Greatness (moral, physical and social) when the arts and sciences have been most cultivated, for when education rears her head, civilization immediately follows as the *result* of education. There is a *course*, however, and that course is the influence which the softer sex possess over the man. And here, I cannot but pay a deserved compliment to the sagacity of the Hon'ble Member of Council, near me (Mr. Bethune). Much praise is due to him for the benevolence which he has manifested—much praise is due for the generosity displayed by him in furtherance of the object itself—but greater

than this is the discernment and discrimination shown by him in selecting the minds of the *women* as the medium through which to civilise the *men*. It is only in barbarous ages, and uncivilized countries, that man has denied to woman the tribute due to her excellence. Where civilization most prevails, the power and influence of the sex is predominant; while *manly merit* is well tested by the devotedness and respect with which woman herself is regarded by the men, in every nation and clime. The British nation at this moment is governed by a woman, accomplished in every way which her grateful subjects can desire, one of whose latest acts has been to send emissaries into all parts of the globe for the purpose of collecting all that the arts, education, science and industry can produce for the benefit and instruction of herself and the people whom she governs.

I have to apologise for trespassing so long upon your time; and now retire; assuring you that the Free masons today have lent their assistance to what they conceive a worthy undertaking without reference to its ultimate good or ill success."

The Hon'ble Mr. Bethune next addressed Sir J. H. Littler and the Company as follows:—

"Sir,—for myself and for my friend Duckinarunjun Mookerjea, I make answer before these witnesses, that we accept the gift and assurance of this land according to the form and tenure of this same deed: and further for myself I promise and undertake, in the presence of this company, that, if life and ability be granted to me, I will build upon this spot a school for the education of Hindu girls, which, with the blessings of God, I trust may be destined hereafter to produce effects worthily entitling it to have a name in the annals of the land.

It is probable, Sir, that there are many persons present who do not know that the ceremony through which we have just gone for giving us the ownership of this land, is the most ancient and honorable form of conveyance of land known to the English law. It has been selected on this occasion, not merely for that reason, not merely because of the remarkable analogy which it bears to the simple forms that have been immemorially used in Eastern countries, but also, and especially, because it has given me an opportunity of publicly associating with myself, and now enables me openly to proclaim my gratitude to the enlightened man who stands near me, to whom jointly with myself, the land has been conveyed. Duckinarunjun Mookerjea was an utter stranger to me: I had never before heard his name, when he introduced himself to me a year and a half ago, for the purpose of letting me know that he had heard of my intention of founding a female school for the benefit of his country: that he could not bear the thought that it should be said hereafter of his countrymen that they had all stood idly looking on, without offering any help in furtherance of the good work: and in short without further preface, that he was the

proprietor of a piece of ground in Calcutta, valued, as I have since learned, at about twelve thousand rupees, which he placed freely and unconditionally at my disposal for the use of the school. It was a noble gift, and nobly given. I subsequently was enabled to possess myself of some adjoining slips of land, until at last we became proprietors of the whole of that which by the munificent liberality of the Government of Bengal, exercised, as I was in substance told, in the letter announcing their decision, expressly to testify their approval of my design, we were permitted to exchange for this more valuable and far more eligible site on which we are now met. It is due to Duckinarunjun Mookerjea that his name should be had in perpetual remembrance in connexion with the foundation of the school.

You have seen possession of this land symbolically given, by delivery to us of a young Asoca tree, which I hope that one of the ladies present will presently do us the honour of planting in a conspicuous place, in that which is intended to become the garden of the school. The choice of this particular tree for the purpose has not been made unadvisedly or without a meaning. I am told that its Bengali name may be not unfitly paraphrased as "The Tree of Gladness." It is commended for this day's ceremony, not only by the gracefulness of its foliage, and the surpassing beauty of its flowers, but also because it is held in especial honour among Hindu women. I understand that formerly they believed that, by eating its blossoms, they should bring a blessing on their children. It seemed to me therefore not an inappropriate representation of an institution of the fruits, of which if they will indeed consent to partake they will bring upon them the choicest blessings of which our nature is capable. I look on it as a happy coincidence that European botanist have also selected this tree to associate it with the memory of one of the most enlightened men whom England ever lent to India. The Jonesia Asoca, for that is its botanical name, recals the name of the great Sir William Jones, one of the earliest who exerted himself to link together the learning of the East and Western worlds; for his zealous untiring labours in the universal spread of knowledge appeared to them to be fitly represented by the elegant and the exuberant beauty of this tree. I propose therefore henceforth that the Asoca tree be made the symbol of female education in India; and not only here, but by every school which has been already established in the villages round Calcutta in imitation of this, and near all those which shall hereafter be multiplied in the land, I suggest that an Asoca tree be planted, a new tree of liberty, to remind us of the bond of fellowship which unites our labours in one common cause.

In the name of all the friends of our young school, in the name of those who are already receiving instruction within its walls where, not many hours ago, I had the pleasure of looking

on thirtysix smiling happy little faces, busily employed in twining this garland of flowers, which they send here as their contribution to assist in gracing the ceremony, in the name of all those who are distinguished hereafter to derive benefit from its establishment, I thank you, Honourable Sir, you, my Lord Biship, you Worshipful Grand Master, and the ancient body on whom you have been called to preside, and all this dignified and fair assembly, for the honour you have done us by attending to give grace and solemnity to the proceedings of this day. It is a day to which for many months I have looked forward with eager hope: anxious to furnish an additional proof to those who have looked doubtfully on our undertaking, of the intense interest which it has excited, and to shew that it is not a mere transient fancy, but is fated to take its place among the settled and honoured institutions of the country.

I take this same opportunity of thanking those, of whom I see many present who have cheered me on by kind expressions of sympathy and encouragement: and among those, I should be indeed ungrateful, if I were not to utter one word of thankful acknowledgement to the native editors of the Bengali Newspapers of this city. I regret extremely that I cannot read them in the original; but from the translations which have been sent to me of some articles, and reports of others, I believe myself entitled to say that, with hardly one exception, they have all declared themselves on my side, and have manfully and clearly advocated either my school especially, or what I consider as practically the same cause, the cause of female education generally. These liberal and enlightened men are all ready to join with me in reprobating those worse than manslayers (of whom, thank God, there are few now to be found in this city) who, if they could, would murder the intellect itself of the fairest half of the earth's inhabitants, and for their own selfish purposes, degrade those, whom God made only a little lower than the angels, to a level not much elevated above that of irrational brute beasts.

There have been some others too of a different temper who, while cordially agreeing with me in the paramount importance to the happiness of the country of female education, have faintly whispered a tremulous doubt whether the step I have taken is not premature; and if they can venture so far as to give any advice would rather have suggested the propriety, of taking into consideration the prudence of well weighing whether it might not perhaps have been wiser to have deliberated if it were not better, to have waited until the nation were more prepared for it. Wait. Yes; Wait, forsooth. With the same patient expectation as the famous rustic of the fable, who sat himself hopefully down by the side of the rolling river, meaning to postpone attempting the passage, when the eternal waters should have flowed away. Rusticus expectat dum de fluat amnis; at ille Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis aevum. Very different

is the maxim inculcated by that witty speaker, but not less shrewd and accurate thinker, the late Sydney Smith. He says "When we have something before us, it will not do to stand shivering on the brink, shrinking from the cold and danger: We must take the plunge at once, and scramble through how we may." This is the true spirit. This acknowledges the mighty power that lies in a distinct purpose, and a determined will. The main difficulty of more difficult things that are worth attempting, lies in the first thought and conception of them: and, for the most part, as soon as they cease to seem impossible, they cease to be so. I do not mean to say that a good design was never spoiled by undue precipitation: but of this I am well assured that for one bold exploit that has been hindered by excess of hardi hord, twenty have been marked by superfluity of deliberation.

> "And thus the native hue of resolution,
> Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought;
> And enterprises of great pith and moment,
> With this respect, their currents turn aside,
> And lose the name of action."

But if ever I had entertained any misgivings whether or not the right hour, had struck for attempting such an institution as this, they have been long ago dissipated. I could give reasons for my conviction in numerous incidents and anecdotes of our school, illustrative of its progress and present state: and having what a hold this idea of female education has now taken upon the minds of the people, never I trust to be eradicated. But I should (not) detain you too long. The approaching darkness warns me to suppress much of what I would otherwise gladly speak, for on this theme I could discourse until the night's fires should pale before tomorrow's dawn, and until the shades of another evening should close another day.—But let me shortly mention the eagerness of the little girls to learn, their extraordinary quickness and intelligence, the obvious pleasure which they take in their studies, after the few first strange days of novelty have passed ever, the growth of similar institutions in various parts of the country, avowedly in imitation of mine, and mostly established in correspondence with me, the earnest but necessarily imperfect attempts which I know to be made by great number of the young men of Bengal to educate their wives, the obvious decay of that bitterness of feeling which on the outset I had to apprehend, and which on the contrary had been replaced (may I not without impropriety allude to them, considering the object with which I do so), by expressions of personal good will toward myself, on account of the establishment of this very school, which have reached me numerously, not only from those who have openly countenanced this school, but also from those from whom it has not hitherto received any active support but to whom I trust we are daily drawing nearer. All these things

have satisfied me that this generation will not pass away without witnessing a marked and happy progress in this matter of female education and a decided elevation of the position of the women of this land in the scale of social existence.

Probably I shall not live even to hear, in my own distant country that this tender sapling has grown into a tree. But there are many here present who may hope to see it hereafter blossoming in luxuriant beauty. Let them then remember the words they have heard me utter this day, that not more surely will they then see it admired, in the grace, the ornament, the pride of this neighbourhood, than they will find this institution, coeval with it, or some other devoted to the like purposes, then gratefully acknowledged as one of the most precious blessings which the British Government has procured for the people of India. You will have no difficulty in understanding, Sir, that I address you now under the influence of complicated and intense emotion, and I am not sufficiently master of myself to be sure of being able to compress into reasonable compass many more ideas suggested by this school, they press and crowd upon me, but the right order and connexion of them escapes my memory and prevents power of arrangement; and I would not willingly enter into any topic connected with the subject, which I must leave imperfectly treated. I will therefore, Sir, say nothing further, but humbly to implore the great God, who made heaven and earth, and all things that are therein who gave, to man and woman alike, the divine and excellent gift of reason, that they might be alike the creatures and instruments of His will, the witnesses of His Almighty power, the worshippers of His unspeakable goodness to grant that His blessings may be on this our infant Institution that thousands of Hindu women may be permitted in coming years to draw from it the lessons of moral and intellectual strength and thereby immeasurably increase the social and domestic happiness of all the people of this land.*

VI. THE CIRCULAR-LETTER IN BENGALI

This circular-letter was in Bengali. I insert it in original, as it was published in *Sambad Prabhakar* for 13th January, 1857:

কলিকাতা ও তৎসান্নিধ্যবাসী হিন্দুবর্গের প্রতি বিজ্ঞাপন।

বীটন প্রতিষ্ঠিত বালিকাবিদ্যালয় সংক্রান্ত সমুদায় কার্য্যের তত্ত্বাবধান করিবার নিমিত্ত গবর্ণমেণ্ট আমাদিগকে কমিটি নিযুক্ত করিয়াছেন। যে নিয়মে বিদ্যালয়ের কার্য্য সকল সম্পন্ন হয় এবং বালিকাদিগের বয়স

* *The Bengal Hurkaru and the India Gazette*, 9th November, 1850.

ও অবস্থার অনুরূপ শিক্ষা দিবার যে সকল উপায় নির্দ্ধারিত আছে, হিন্দুসমাজের লোকদিগের অবগতি নিমিত্ত, আমরা সে সমুদায় নিম্নে নির্দ্দেশ করিতেছি।

উক্ত বিদ্যালয় এই কমিটির অধীন। বালিকাদিগকে শিক্ষা দিবার নিমিত্ত এক বিবি প্রধান শিক্ষকের পদে নিযুক্ত আছেন। শিক্ষা-কার্য্যে তাঁহার সহকারিতা করিবার নিমিত্ত আর দুই বিবি ও একজন পণ্ডিত নিযুক্ত আছেন।

বালিকারা যখন বিদ্যালয়ে উপস্থিত থাকে, প্রেসিডেণ্ট অর্থাৎ সভাপতির স্পষ্ট অনুমতি ব্যতিরেকে, নিযুক্ত পণ্ডিত ভিন্ন অন্য কোন পুরুষ বিদ্যালয়ে প্রবেশ করিতে পান না।

ভদ্রজাতি ও ভদ্রবংশের বালিকারা এই বিদ্যালয়ে প্রবিষ্ট হইতে পারে, তদ্ব্যতীত আর কেহই পারে না। যাবৎ কমিটির অধ্যক্ষদের প্রতীতি না জন্মে অমুক বালিকা সদ্বংশজাতা এবং যাবৎ তাঁহারা নিযুক্ত করিবার অনুমতি না দেন, তাবৎ কোন বালিকাই ছাত্রীরূপে পরিগৃহীত হয় না।

পুস্তক পাঠ, হাতের লেখা, পাটীগণিত, পদার্থজ্ঞান, ভূগোল ও সূচীকর্ম্ম, এই সকল বিষয়ে বালিকারা শিক্ষা পাইয়া থাকে। সকল বালিকাই বাঙ্গালা ভাষা শিক্ষা করে। আর যাহাদের কর্ত্তৃপক্ষীয়েরা ইঙ্গরেজী শিখাইতে ইচ্ছা করেন তাহারা ইঙ্গরেজীও শিখে।

বালিকাদিগকে বিনা বেতনে শিক্ষা ও বিনা মূল্যে পুস্তক দেওয়া গিয়া থাকে। আর যাহাদের দূরে বাড়ী, এবং স্বয়ং গাড়ী অথবা পাল্কী করিয়া আসিতে অসমর্থ, তাহাদিগকে বিদ্যালয়ে আনিবার ও বিদ্যালয় হইতে লইয়া যাইবার নিমিত্ত গাড়ী ও পাল্কী নিযুক্ত আছে।

হিন্দুজাতীয় স্ত্রীলোকদিগের যথোপযুক্ত বিদ্যা শিক্ষা হইলে, হিন্দু-সমাজের ও এতদ্দেশের যে কত উপকার হইবে, তদ্বিষয়ে অধিক উল্লেখ করা অনাবশ্যক। যাঁহাদের অন্তঃকরণ জ্ঞানালোক দ্বারা প্রদীপ্ত হইয়াছে, তাঁহারা অবশ্যই বুঝিতে পারেন ইহা কত প্রার্থনীয় যে যাঁহার সহিত যাবজ্জীবন সহবাস করিতে হয় সেই স্ত্রী সুশিক্ষিত ও জ্ঞানাপন্ন হন এবং শিশু সন্তানদিগকে শিক্ষা দিতে পারেন; আর স্ত্রী ও কন্যাগণের মনোবৃত্তি প্রকৃতরূপে মার্জ্জিত হইয়া অকিঞ্চিৎকর কার্য্যের অনুষ্ঠানে

পরাঙ্মুখ থাকে এবং যে সকল কার্য্যের অনুষ্ঠানে বুদ্ধিবৃত্তির উন্নতি ও পরিশুদ্ধি হইতে পারে তাহাতে প্রবৃত্ত হয়।

অতএব আমরা এতদ্দেশীয় মহাশয়দিগকে অনুরোধ করিতেছি, এই সকল গুরুতর উদ্দেশ্য সাধনের যে উপায় নিরূপিত রহিয়াছে, সেই উপায় অবলম্বন করিয়া তাহার ফলভাগী হউন। এই সকল উদ্দেশ্য সাধন হিন্দু-ধর্ম্মের অনুযায়ী ও হিন্দুসমাজের প্রকৃত মঙ্গল সাধন।

সিসিল বীডন,	সভাপতি।
রাজা শ্রীকালীকৃষ্ণ বাহাদুর,	সভ্য।
শ্রীপ্রতাপচন্দ্র সিংহ,	„
শ্রীহরচন্দ্র ঘোষ	„
শ্রীঅমৃতলাল মিত্র	„
শ্রীপ্রাণনাথ রায় চতুর্ধুরীণ	„
শ্রীরামরত্ন রায়	„
শ্রীরাজেন্দ্র দত্ত	„
শ্রীনৃসিংহচন্দ্র বসু	„
শ্রীভবানীপ্রসাদ দত্ত	„
শ্রীরমাপ্রসাদ রায়	„
শ্রীকাশীপ্রসাদ ঘোষ	„

শ্রীঈশ্বরচন্দ্র শর্ম্মা।
সম্পাদক।

কলিকাতা বালিকা বিদ্যালয়
২৪ ডিসেম্বর, ১৮৫৬ সাল।

VII. A NOTE ON THE HINDI VERSION OF *STRI SIKSHAVIDHAYAKA*

By Dr. Mahadeb Saha

Pandit Gour Mohan Vidyalankar's 'Stri Sikshavidhayak' is a work of great historical and social value on the female education in India. When first published in 1822 by the Calcutta School-Book Society, it comprised of only fourteen pages. So far as I know, no copy of this edition is available in this country, but a copy is preserved in the British Museum.

In French scholar Gaicin De Tassy's work we find mention of 'Apology for female education, in Hindi Kari boli.—Calcutta,

1822' published by the same Calcutta School-Book Society. (Histoire De La Litterature Hindoni Et Hindoustani, Tome I, Paris, 1839, p. 557.) There is no doubt that this Hindi work is a translation of the Bengali book of Gour Mohan Vidyalankar. Up till now no copy of this Hindi edition has been found. But fortunately a copy of the Hindi translation published in 1823 is available to us. It is a book of twenty-two pages. The fourth revised and enlarged edition of the original Bengali book was published in B. S. 1231 or 1824, A.D. So it can be safely said that the Hindi edition of 1823 must have been translated from the second or third Bengali edition. Just like the original Bengali work, the Hindi translation was published several times, from Calcutta, Agra and elsewhere.

That Stri Sikshavidhayak was translated into Hindi in the same year along with the Bengali one by the Calcutta School-Book Society has not yeat been mentioned by any scholar.

The writer of this note is engaged in editing the first and fourth editions of the Bengali one and the 1823 edition of its Hindi translation.

VIII. BAPTIST GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOL

Early History

By Debendra Nath Mitra,
Secretary to the School.

The Baptist Girls' High School at Entally is perhaps the oldest existing female school, started by the Christian Missionaries, in this part of the country.

From old records it is learnt that the school was originally started at Cossipore by the Rev. G. Pearce in 1827 and that it was known as "Native Female Asylum" in those days. A Boys' School was also started at the same place the following year (1828). When the present premises were acquired by the Baptist Mission Society, both the institutions were moved to Entally in 1838. At this time a Theological Seminary was started, attached to the Boys' School. This was closed in 1846; Boys' Boarding School also closed in 1854. The Girls' School, which was a free school, continued in its course though there were various changes from time to time. The school was thoroughly recognised in 1863 and the Boarding School started on a new basis through the inspiration of Mrs. Kemp. From 1870 it was decided to charge a small fee from those who could pay. From the date of the re-organisation (1863), instruction has been given in cooking, house-work and sewing. The Baptist Missionary Society met practically all the expences. Though some of the girls paid fees from 1870, the amount re-

alised was negligible. By this time the school had attraced the attention of Government and some amount of grant was given to the school, though the exact date when the grant started it is difficult to say. However, from a report dated 1896 it is learnt that the school was enjoying a government grant of Rs. 1385, and that the amount realised as fees was Rs. 240 only for the year. From this one may have an idea how the Baptist Missionary Society had been running the school practically on their own. Besides, there was a large number of orphan girls. The police also sent a number of rescued children. Some children orphaned during the 1897 famine were also sent to the school. They paid no fees but were provided with everything. Teaching in cooking, house-work, sewing and First-Aid continued in spite of heavy increase in expenditure.

Upto 1902 the school occupied the building, now being used by Carey High School. In 1903 the school moved to its present site, 85 South Road (Dr. Suresh Sarkar Road). At this time a Normal Class was started in conjunction with the School to train suitable girls as teachers with a view to improving the standard of teaching.

IX. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

To reconstruct the history of women's education in early nineteenth century, it is indispensable to hunt up *MS.* and printed records of the time. Fortunately for me, I have come across some *MS.* records in the family library of Raja Radhakant Deb, which have been very useful in reconstructing this history. Files of *Missionary Intelligence*, also found there and utilised by me, throw much light on the activities of the Christian Missionaries and their females in the direction of women's education. *The Calcutta Christian Observer*, conducted on behalf of the various Christian denominations, is a faithful recorder of these activities during the thirties and forties of the last century. I take this opportunity of thanking Dr. Jadunath Sarkar, the doyen among Indian Historians, for lending me files of the *Observer*, preserved by him so carefully. *The Friend of India* of the period also kept a watchful eye on the movement and noticed all affairs and incidents leading to the female improvement. I have got some valuable material in *Sambadpatre Sekaler Katha*, two volumes, compiled mainly from *Samachar Darpan* with copious notes by the late lamented Brojendra Nath Banerjee. I have consulted and utilised many other newspapers and periodicals mentioned in course of the narrative.

Something should be said of the *MS.* records. I have got some valuable material in the *MS. Proceedings* of the Calcutta School Society. The printed annual reports of this Society are

rarely to be found. While ransacking the *MS. Proceedings* of the Society for the preparation of my papers on primary education, I have found some references to the activities of the Female Juvenile Society in them. In the *MS.* correspondence volumes of Raja Radhakant Deb, preserved in his family library, I discovered some letters written by the Raja to J. E. D. Bethune and used them in an article published in the *Modern Review* for June 1942. This paper has been inserted bodily in the Appendix. I invite my brother-researchers to utilise these *MS.* records of Raja Radhakant's library for compiling a comprehensive history of the nineteenth century Indian Renaissance.

Of the books containing information on this subject, that of Charles Lustington of the Bengal Civil Service, *History, Design, and Present State of the Religious, Benevolent and Charitable Institutions, etc.,* deserves special mention. This book gives a brief account of the first four or five years' activities of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, as also the story of the exertions of Mrs. Wilson leading to the foundation of the Ladies' Society in 1824. The book was published in December 1824.

The *Stri Sikshavidhayaka* of Pandit Gour Mohan Vidyalanker, published for the first time in 1822 by the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society, and subsequently by the Calcutta School-Book Society, contains some information about the missionary activities of the time. This book was also translated in Hindi. In *Indian Recollection* (London, 1832) J. Statham depicts his personal experience as to the exertions of the Calcutta Female Juvenile Society in its first four years. He emphatically says that the Society had the credit of being the pioneer in the cause of women's education in India. *Hindoo Female Education* by Priscilla Chapman (London, 1839) mainly deals with the activities of Mrs. Wilson and the Ladies' Society.

The Rev. K. M. Banerjea's *Native Female Education*, to which I have referred in the narrative, deserves special mention for reasons more than one. Its forceful advocacy for women's education led his compatriots to think seriously over the matter and take up some practical measures in this behalf. Though some of the observations contained in the book provoked criticism, still it was welcomed as the first treatise to propose education of the Hindu females in the *Zenana*, the public schools for girls being then unpopular. It was originally the subject of a Prize-Essay, and first published in July 1841. A revised and enlarged edition of the book was later published under influential auspices in 1848.

The Rev. James Jong gives at some length in his *Hand-book of Bengal Missions* (1848) the story of the activities of the Ladies' Society and a very short account of the Ladies' Association. *The Life and Times of Carey, Marshman and Ward,*

etc., by J. C. Marshman, narrates briefly the educational activities of the Mission in general and those for the females in particular in and around Serampore. These endeavours took practical shape in different missionary stations all over Northern India, from Akyab to Allahabad. *Selections from Educational Records*, Parts I & II, while recording the educational activities mainly by the State agency upto 1859, contains some material of the early exertions of the Christian missionaries with regard to female educations. But these should be used with caution as there are some discrepancies to be found in this portion of the treatise.

So far as the Bethune School (and later, Bethune School and College) is concerned, much new material has been utilised by the present author in compiling the history of the institution for the *Bethune School and College Centenary Volume*. The history of the institution there has been drawn to 1949. The English and Bengali biographies of Pandit Iswarchandra Vidyasagar, the Bengali life of Pandit Madan Mohan Tarkalankar, and similar works necessarily include some valuable and reliable accounts relating to the foundation and progress of the Bethune School. The *Annual Reports* of the Council of Education, and since 1855, those of the Director of Public Instruction, contain enough valuable material which gives us authentic and authoratative information regarding female education. The late Mr. Brajendra Nath Banerjee's paper on "Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar as a Promoter of Female Education in Bengal" published in the *Journal and Proceedings, Asiatic Society of Bengal* (New Series), vol. xxiii, 1927, No. 3, throws much light on the Pandit's connection with Mr. Bethune's School since the latter's lifetime, and also contains valuable material on the subsequent female education movement in Bengal.

Besides these, I have consulted some other contemporary books and papers of no less importance. But all cannot be mentioned here for obvious reasons.

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